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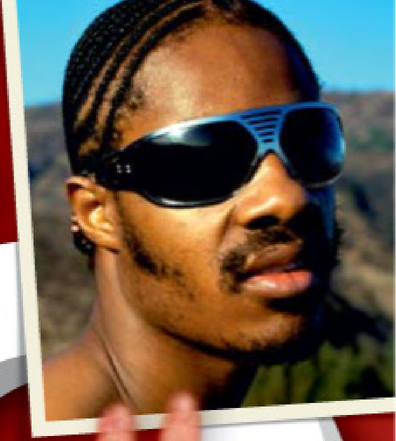

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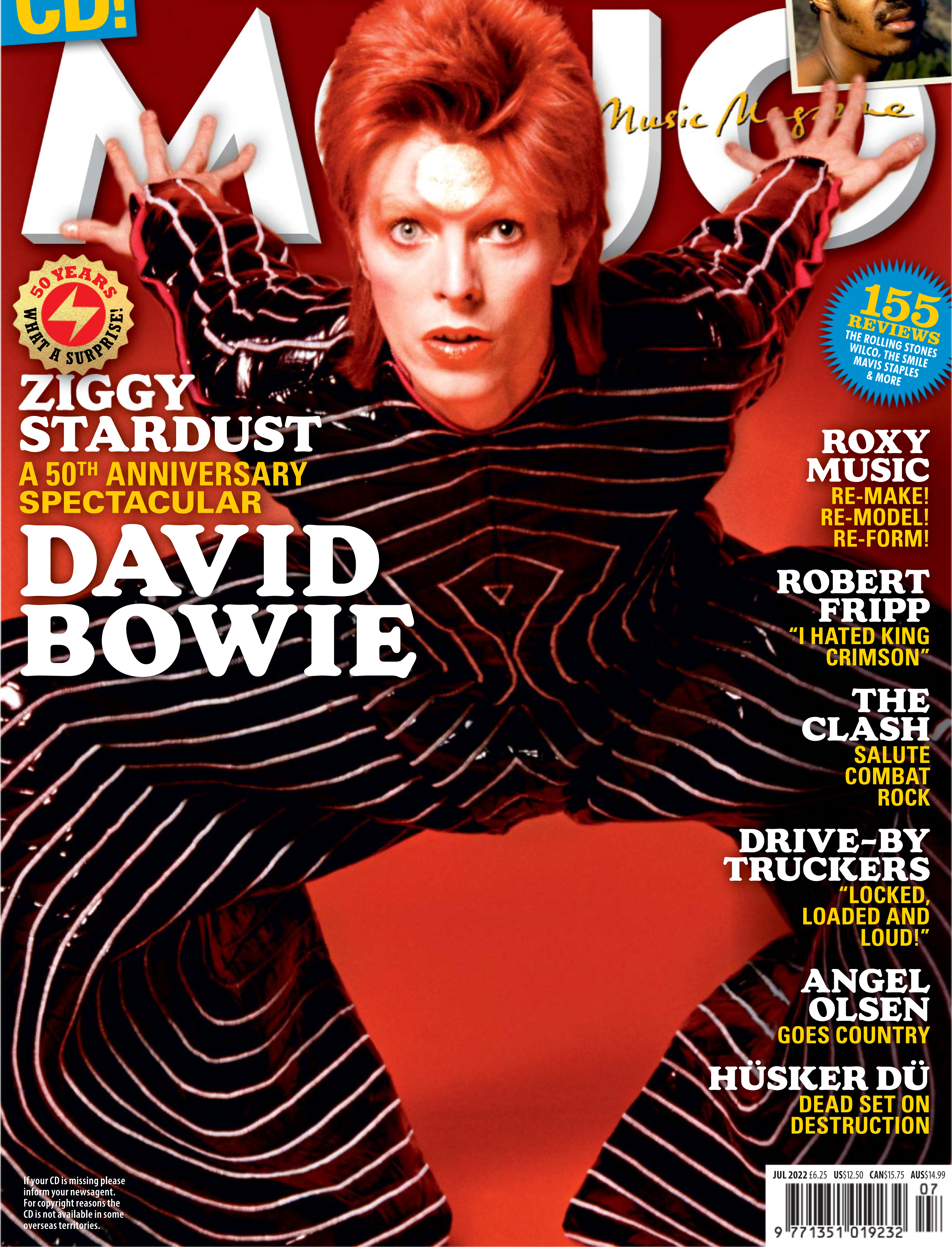

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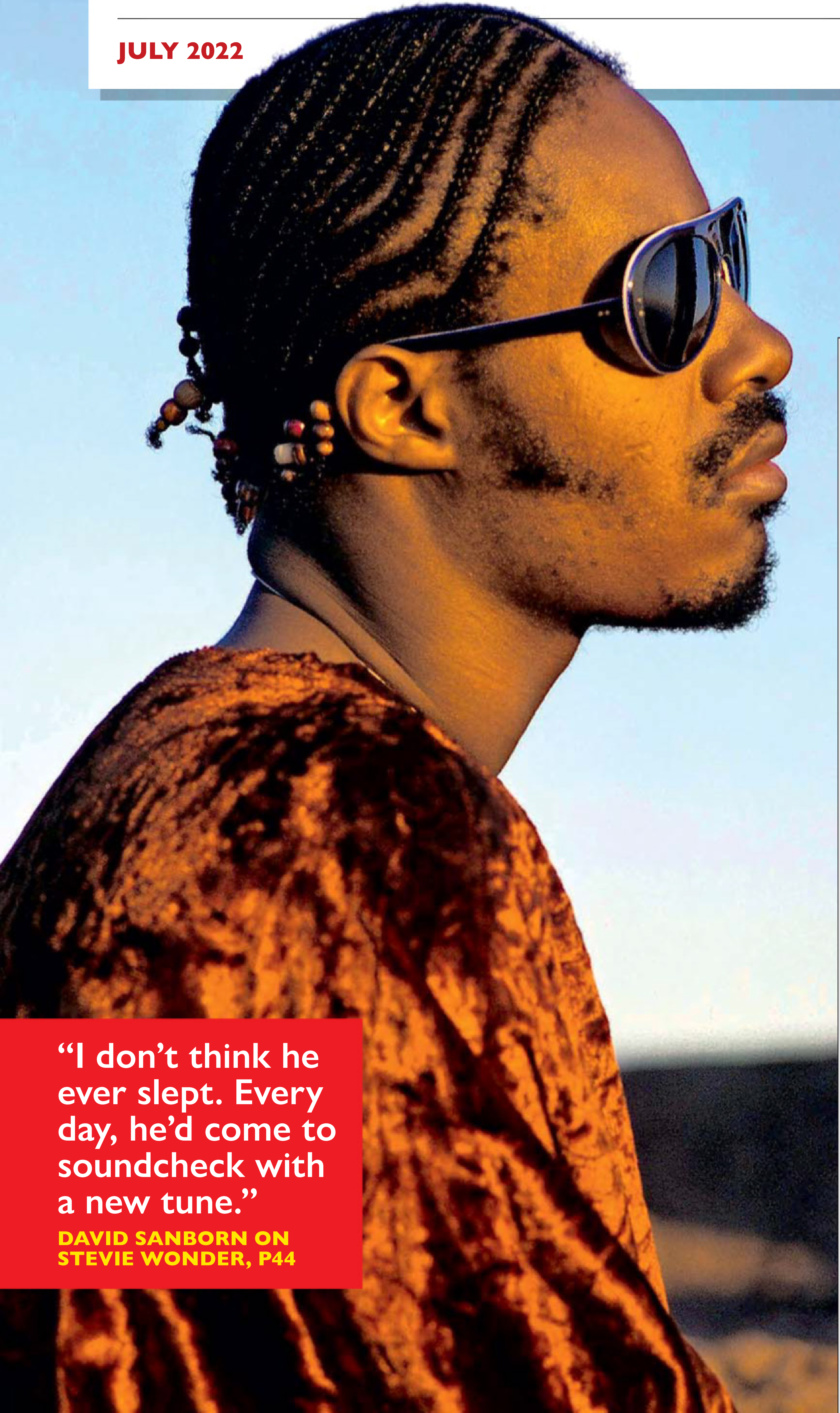

> “I don’t think he ever slept. Every day, he’d come to soundcheck with a new tune.”
>
> **DAVID SANBORN ON STEVIE WONDER, P44**

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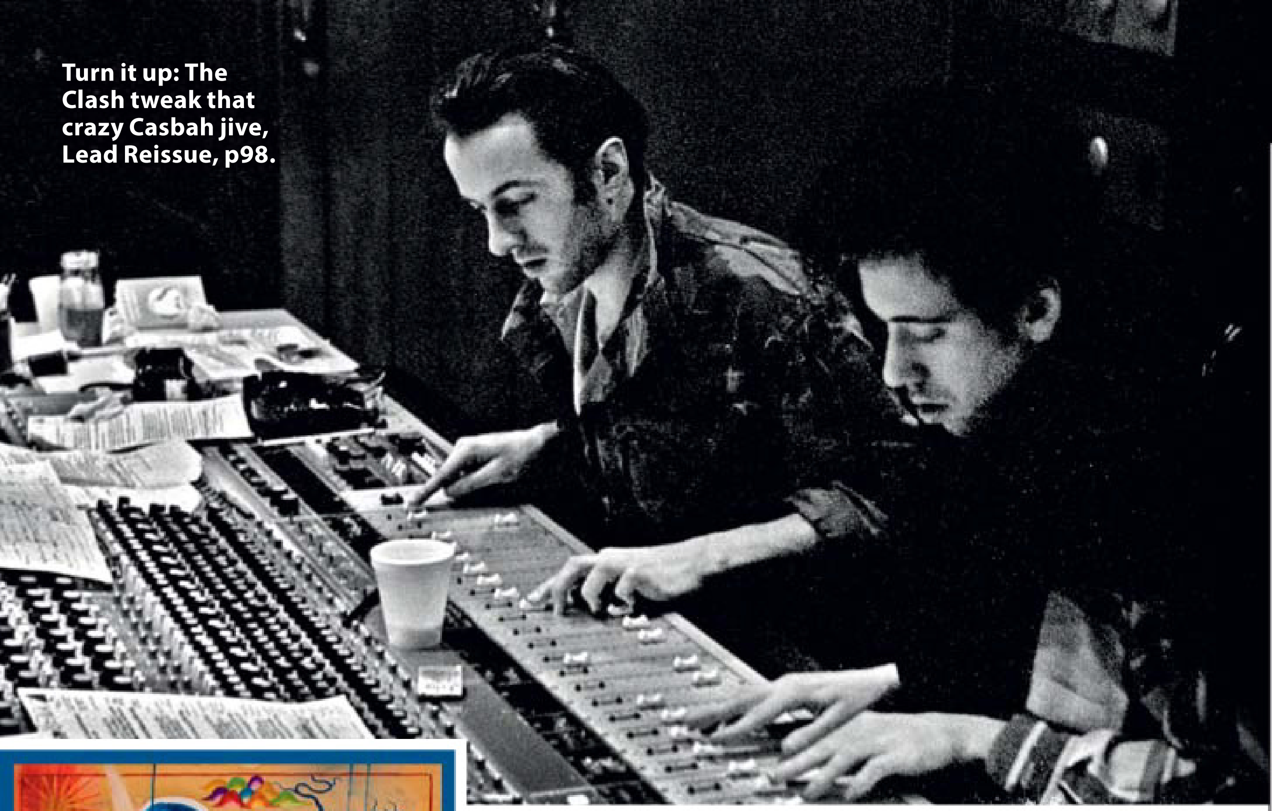
54 THE VELVET UNDERGROUND A demo tape, sealed in an envelope since 1965, is opened. Inside: Heroin *à la* Dylan, Pale Blue Eyes with John Cale on harmony, and revelations besides.

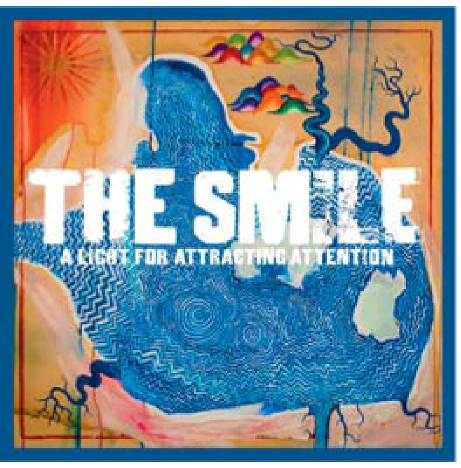
62 C86 & UK INDIE Between The Smiths and Madchester, Britain wore anoraks and grooved to a grass roots indie revival. Nige Tassell tracks down the winners and losers.

COVER STORY

66 DAVID BOWIE Fifty years since Ziggy Stardust sent David Bowie soaring spaceward, his collaborators remember the album, the gigs, the cover, the haircut, the legacy and more. “This time, he knew the world was his for the taking…”

Alamy


Turn it up: The Clash tweak that crazy Casbah jive, Lead Reissue, p98.


THE SMILE
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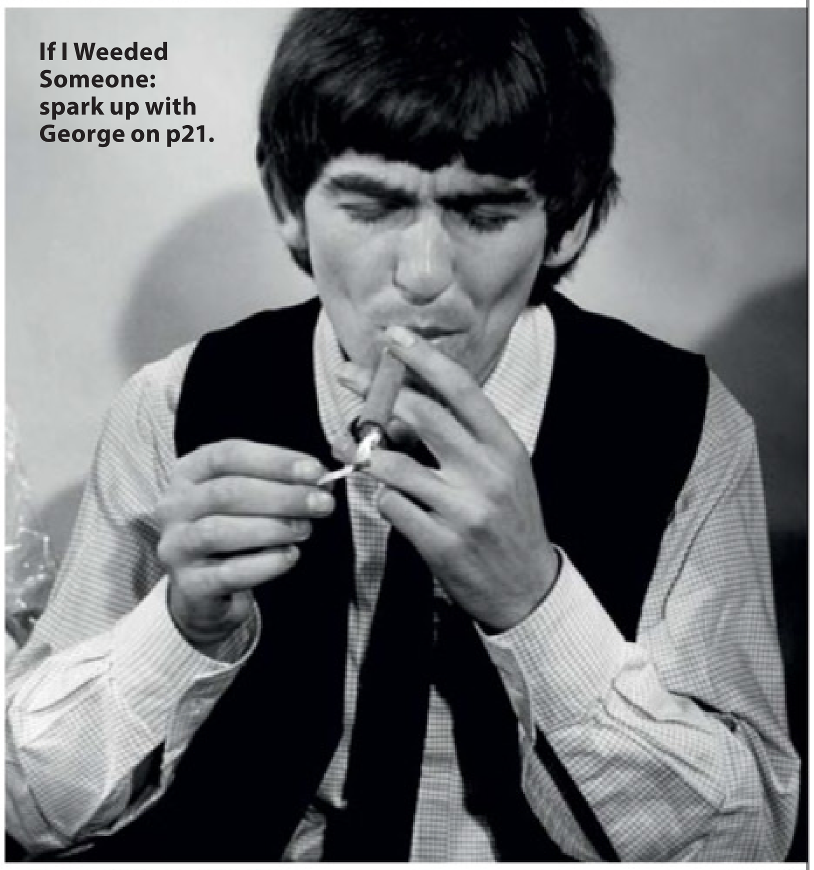
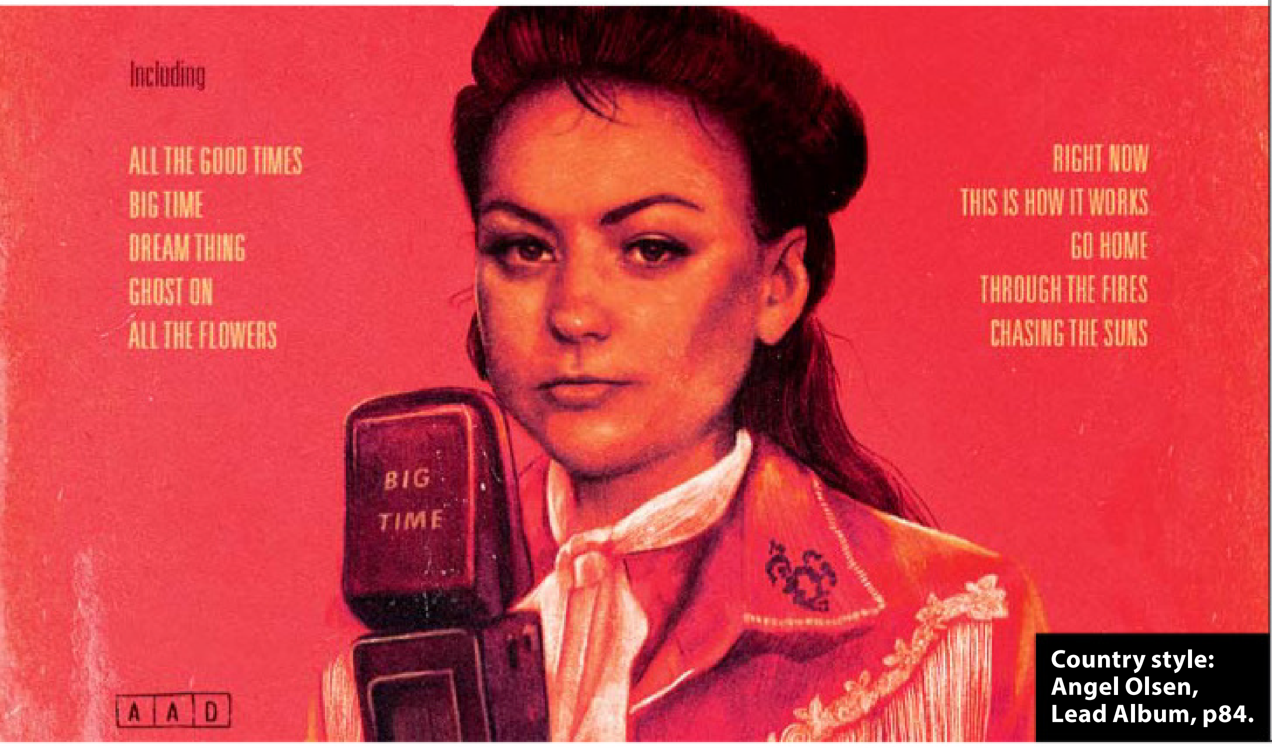
HEROES and VILLAINS
the Sound of LOS ANGELES 1965-68


If I Weeded Someone: spark up with George on p21.



Country style: Angel Olsen, Lead Album, p84.

MOJO

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9 ALL BACK TO MY PLACE Clare Grogan, Al Stewart and Hollie Cook take their golden platters from their record boxes.

112 REAL GONE Klaus Schulze, Chris Bailey, Jordan, Art Rupe, Cynthia Plaster Caster, Bobby Rydell and many more, goodnight.

120 ASK MOJO Why are some soundalikes less actionable than others?

122 HELLO GOODBYE It began when a local bar needed a covers band. It ended when drugs and money muddied the waters. Greg Norton remembers the glory of Hüsker Dü.

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14 ROXY MUSIC Celebrating 50 years of in-crowd art rock, Roxy reunite for gigs! Phil Manzanera and Paul Thompson give us a glimpse behind the curtain of preparation. Plus! Bryan Ferry tells all about his new lyrics book.

18 BUILT TO SPILL The Boise, Idaho indie-rock stagers have a new album, flavoured by lockdown, South American adventures and new blood. "David Bowie was a hero of mine," says mainman Doug Martsch. "I want to follow in his footsteps."

20 DARLENE LOVE She sang lead on The Crystals' He's A Rebel, and more besides. Now the legendary singer talks the Wall Of Sound, the Devil's music and hard-won wisdom.

21 ROCK STAR WEED A new George Harrison cannabis brand joins the other celebrity-endorsed strains on offer. As MOJO has a sly puff for medicinal reasons, Steve Van Zandt gives us his take on the phenomenon.

22 HARVEY MANDEL Yes, he was almost a member of the Stones. But this Detroit guitar mage, nicknamed The Snake, has done much more. We stop by to chew the fat.

MOJO FILTER

84 NEW ALBUMS Angel Olsen thinks big, plus Wilco, Sun's Signature and The Smile.

98 REISSUES The Clash reappraised, plus the Stones live, Ella Fitzgerald and Robert Fripp.

110 BOOKS Chris Blackwell's memoir, plus J Dilla biog and John Lennon's untold story.

THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS INCLUDE...

Kris Needs

A wet smacker from David Bowie minutes after the unveiling of Ziggy Stardust at his local Aylesbury club remains one of Kris's defining teenage moments (as recounted on page 76). Fifty years later, Kris is wrestling with three books, his DJing comeback and making his first solo album with some old friends.

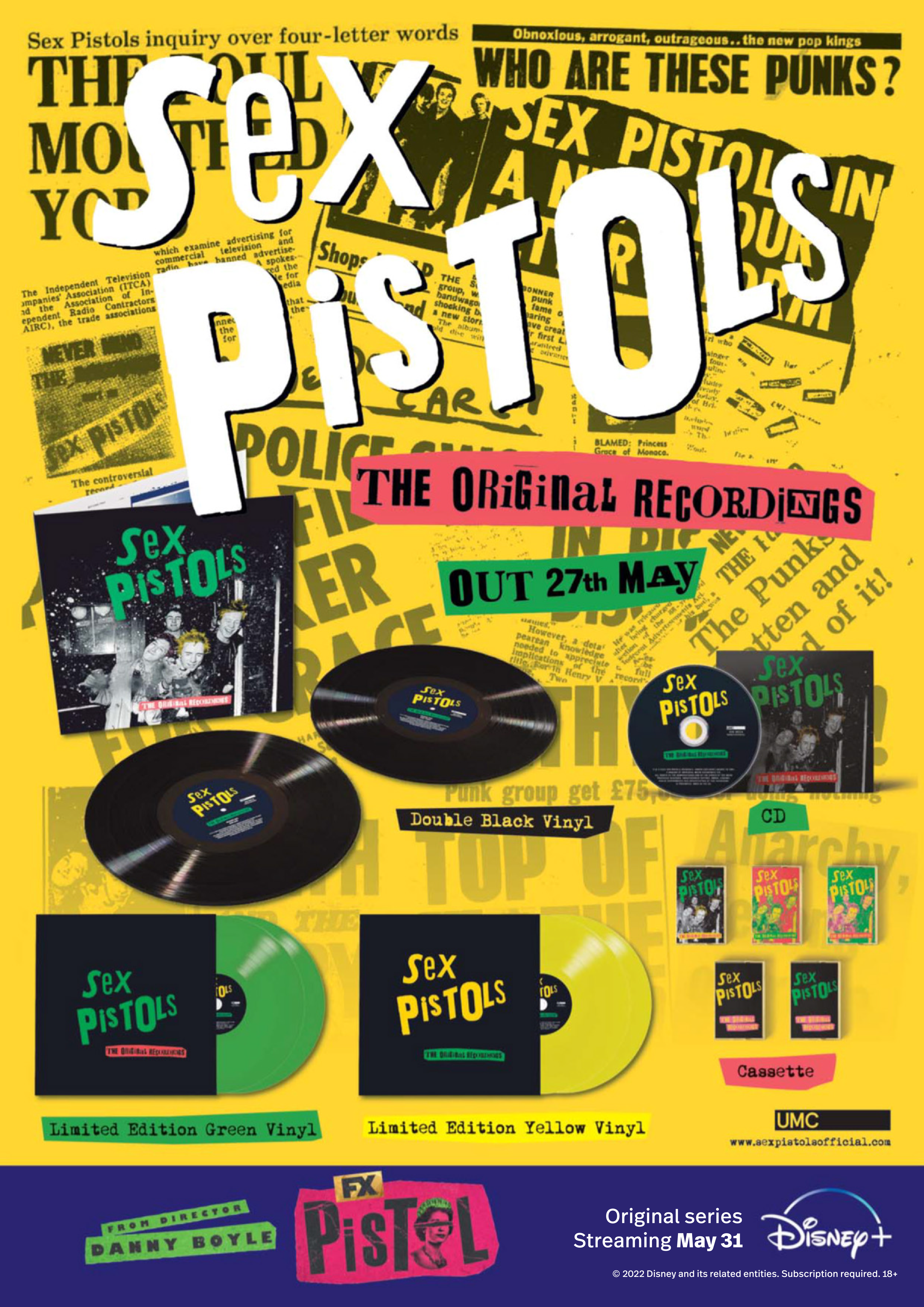
Will Hodgkinson

Writing about recently unearthed, folky versions of Velvet Underground classics including Heroin and I'm Waiting For The Man from May '65 gave Will the shivers, and not in a drug-related way. His social history, In Perfect Harmony: Singalong Pop In '70s Britain, is published by Nine Eight Books in September.

Nige Tassell

A music writer for several decades, journalist and author Nige has spent the last few months travelling the country in search of indie musicians of yore for his new book Whatever Happened To The C86 Kids? As he explains, "some became rock stars, some became driving instructors." Read extracts from the book on page 62.

Peter Strain, Josh Cheuse, Getty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GLAM NUGGETS

SPARKS
NEW YORK DOLLS
MICK RONSON
DANA GILLESPIE
SUZI QUATRO
HOLLYWOOD BRATS

15 WHAM BAM RARITIES FROM THE BOOGIE CHILDREN!

fontana
45
2
WE DON'T CARE
GUMBO

1 GUMBO
WE DON'T CARE

Obscurity surrounds this 1974 B-side released only in France and Belgium – and why's there a female voice when there are only geezers on the sleeve? Yet its howling guitars, chugging boogie and we-don't-need-no-education nihilism equals prime glam proto-punk. As well as recording as U.K. Jones, producer/writer Mike Berry worked with Ning, Boneshaker and Biggles.

Written by Berry. Published by Sparta Florida Music Group Ltd. ℗&©1974 Cherry Red Records Ltd ISRC Code – GBBLY2200103 Licensed courtesy of Cherry Red Records.

2 SPARKS
THIS TOWN AIN'T BIG ENOUGH FOR BOTH OF US

This re-recorded version of the Maels' biggest UK hit remains a classic of their *oeuvre*. An unnerving yet exhilarating combination of the operatic, old Hollywood and hard rocking, with tongue-twisting lyrics of romantic angst, stampeding rhinos and Western gun fights, it sounds like an Art Deco precursor to Queen's Bohemian Rhapsody.

Written by Ron Mael. Published by BMG Rights Management. ℗&©Sparks 2008. 2008 recording. www.allsparks.com

3 NEW YORK DOLLS
PERSONALITY CRISIS

Recording with Todd Rundgren, lead Doll David Johansen asked if his vocals were "ludicrous enough." Suitably, here was glam collapsing into total decadence, with the era's psych-fracturing reinventions played out with pre-punk fury. Features Jerry Nolan, after original drummer Billy Murcia died of an overdose in 1972.

Written by Thunders/Johansen. Published by Warner Chappell/EMI Songs Ltd. ℗&©1992 Skydog International Licensed courtesy of Jungle Records GBCST-9227501. From *Manhattan Mayhem*. FREUDCD075

4 HOLLYWOOD BRATS
SICK ON YOU

Lamenting the decline in fast, lewd rock'n'roll, these London rockers mounted a counter insurgency. Admirers of the New York Dolls both musically and sartorially, in his memoir Sick On You singer Andrew Matheson describes their signature effluviant as "a perfect, snarling, four-minute chainsaw symphony."

Written by Matheson/Steel. Published by Panache Music. ℗&©1980 Cherry Red Records Ltd ISRC Code – GB-BLY-79-00012 Licensed courtesy of Cherry Red Records.

9 JOHN HOWARD
SMALL TOWN, BIG ADVENTURES

At the shopping-at-Biba/piano bar end of the glam eruption, this 1973 demo by Lancashire singer-songwriter Howard bagged him his deal for 1975's *Kid In A Big World* LP, another record to go unreleased until the noughties. His latest album, this year's *Look*, is inspired by transgender pioneer April Ashley.

Written by John Howard. (GBDJN7400450). Published by Transistor Music/Administered by Kassner Associated Publishers Ltd. ℗&©1974 John Howard, licensed courtesy of Another Planet Music ltd. www.anotherplanetmusic.net

10 SUZI QUATRO
ROCK HARD

Detroit trailblazer Suzi's hot streak of hits ended six years before. Yet for 1980's Rock Hard, there was a last re-statement of her bond with writing/production team Mike Chapman and Nicky Chinn. Sadly, this late-glam stomper was the end of her initial working relationship with Chinn, but Chapman – aided by the Sweet's Andy Scott – returned for 2006's *Back To The Drive*.

Written by Chapman, Chinn. Published by Universal Music Publishing MGB Ltd. ℗&©1980 Cherry Red Records Ltd ISRC Code – GBBLY1200472 Licensed courtesy of Cherry Red Records.

11 SHAKANE
GANG MAN

A Bristol band active since 1964, formerly known as Force West, Oscar Bicycle and Memphis Belle, Shakane's 1976 Junk Shop Glam selection Gang Man is a crunching, Slade-like piece of glam boogie to get the youth club jumping. However, while they enjoyed success in Germany and Sweden, a UK breakthrough was not to be, and the group finally called it a day in 2014.

Written by Trusler. Published by Copyright Control. ℗&©1974 Cherry Red Records Ltd ISRC Code – GB23E1100615 Licensed courtesy of Cherry Red Records.

RTS.28
LET'S GO
ROCK REBELLION

12 ROCK REBELLION
LET'S GO

Now to the terraces for a pie, a cup of steaming Bovril and some light football hooliganism, as this saxed-up cover of The Routers' 1962 number is given the full Mike Leander treatment with maximum crowd participation. It's played by alumni of Screaming Lord Sutch's band, and produced by Roger Easterby and Des Champ, who also worked with Chicory Tip.

Written by Duncan, Duncan. Published by Universal/MCA Music Ltd. ℗&©1973 Cherry Red Records Ltd ISRC Code – GBBLY2003905 Licensed courtesy of Cherry Red Records.

Getty (4), Avalon.red, Aaron Rapoport, Courtesy Charlie Dobson/Bob Pedrick, Another Planet

ZIGGY PLAYED GUITAARRRR – AND HE WASN'T THE only one. Since Bolan appeared bedecked in glitter in '71, glam had been out of the bag, percolating and mutating in Britain and America. A big and flashy amalgam encompassing rock'n'roll guitars, decadence, spectacle, flamboyance, bubblegum, glamour, escape and, often, a thumping trucker's beat, the church was a broad one. As well as such big hitters as Roxy Music, Sparks, Lou Reed, Slade, Sweet and Suzi Quatro, there was an underworld of influential prophets unacknowledged in their lifetime – hello, New York Dolls – and for obscuria-hungry bin-trawlers, the legions of spirited never-weres with goofy names, the hod carriers in lipstick whose output has been formalised as Junk Shop Glam.

So here are MOJO's Glam Nuggets: a roll call of the great and good, and the triers who took the promise of glam and ran with it, often as it transmogrified into punk. And also the unknown soldiers, whose marginal breaks for the big time often understood the invitation to the glam gallery just as well as the ones who actually made it.

MOJO PRESENTS
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SPARKS
NEW YORK DOLLS
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DANA GILLESPIE
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15 WHAM BAM RARITIES FROM THE BOOGIE CHILDREN!

5 HAMMERSMITH GORILLAS

I LIVE IN STYLE IN MAIDA VALE

When he formed the Hammersmith Gorillas in 1973, rock'n'roll lifer Jesse Hector memorably declared his haircut was, "Mod on top, skinhead at the back, with rockabilly sideburns." Thuggish elsewhere in their bruising catalogue, this arch, lovelorn song shows their more reflective side, like Slade in ballad mode.

Written by Jesse Hector. Published by Rockin' Music. ℗&©1999 original recording owned by Another Planet Music ltd. www.anotherplanetmusic.net

6 DANA GILLESPIE

ANDY WARHOL

Produced by Bowie and Mick Ronson, this *Hunky Dory* song of surfaces and their deeper truths appeared on Gillespie's *Weren't Born A Man* LP in 1974. A fuller, more dramatic take than Bowie's, with serrated guitars from Ronson, it was reputedly hated by its subject. "He took it very badly," said Bowie in 1997. "But he liked my shoes."

Written by David Bowie. Published by Bewley Brothers/EMI Music Pub Ltd/Chrysalis Music ISRC Code – GBBLY1000587. ℗&©1973 Mainman Licensed courtesy of Cherry Red Records.

7 MICK RONSON

GROWING UP AND I'M FINE

Another Bowie song, this time from Ronno's 1974 solo debut *Slaughter On 10th Avenue*. A song of male bonding and when it's time to leave the gang, its rueful Spiders moves were sadly apt: their partnership's triumphant four years had now drawn to a close with Bowie's decision to kill off Ziggy Stardust.

Written by David Bowie. Published by RZO Music Ltd/EMI Music Publishing Ltd/Chrysalis Music Ltd ISRC Code – GBBLY0903344. ℗&©1974 Mainman Licensed courtesy of Cherry Red Records.

8 BRETT SMILEY

SPACE ACE

There were high hopes for young American Brett Smiley: this 1974 B-side, not unadjacent to Bowie's Starman in its cosmic reverie, but with hints of violence and insecurity, was performed live on Russell Harty's UK chat show. Yet fame eluded Smiley, and his LP *Breathlessly Brett* went unreleased until 2003.

Written by Brett Smiley. Published by Tro Essex Music Ltd. Produced by Andrew Loog Oldham. ℗ &©1974 Cavalcade Records Ltd., a BMG company Licensed courtesy of BMG Rights Management (UK) Ltd. ISRC: GBAZJ1000112

TOP HIT ENGLAND
RCA
GD-7
THE RAH BAND
THE CRUNCH
Part 1 & 2

13 THE RAH BAND

THE CRUNCH

Inspired to go electronic by Hot Butter's 1972 hit Popcorn, Beatles and Nick Drake arranger Richard A Hewson partly produced this meaty, beaty space-glam behemoth – and UK Number 6 hit – at home in Putney. With sax by Brit-jazz mainstay Peter King, it was a success across Europe and Number 1 in Australia. The RAH Band also went Top 10 with 1985's Clouds Across The Moon.

Written by Richard Hewson. Published by Warner Chappell Music International Ltd ISRC Code – GBBLY0602867. ℗&©1978 Rah Productions. Licensed courtesy of Cherry Red Records.

THE DAMNED
MORNING BIRD
THETA

14 THE DAMNED

MORNING BIRD

A hand-clapping, tub-thumping melange of cod-Macca-isms, T.Rex and S.O.S by ABBA, Morning Bird was released on Miki Dallon's Young Blood International label, home of Cockerel Chorus's Nice One Cyril. It's nothing to do with the punk band, though Rat Scabies was on the Dutch 45 cover of Let's Go To The Disco by glamsters The Tartan Horde in '77, alongside its producer Nick Lowe.

Written by Davies, Nyers, Fisherman. Published by Olofsong Music. ℗&©1974 Cherry Red Records Ltd ISRC Code – GB23E1101447 Licensed courtesy of Cherry Red Records.

15 GREG ROBBINS

VIRGINIA CREEPER

If anyone knows anything about Greg Robbins, who recorded just this one 45 in 1973 and then seemingly vanished, please let us know. Until then, this merrily bungs Sparks, Roxy, Cockney Rebel, Bolan and more into the mix, as Moogs squeal, a pub piano steps on it and the helium-voiced singer tells of a woman of prodigious size, superpowers and good times.

Written by Greg Robbins. Published by Edward Kassner Music Co. Ltd. ℗&©1977 Original recording owned by President Records ltd. Licensed from President Records with thanks to Another Planet Music ltd.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY ZIGGY!

50TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS START ON PAGE 66

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Clare Grogan

ALTERED IMAGES' PRESENT-GIVER

What music are you currently grooving to?

I'm gigging quite a lot so we have a dressing room mixtape we get into the groove with. **Grace Jones**, **Grandmaster Flash**, **The Tom Tom Club**, **Kraftwerk**, **Self Esteem**, **Lizzo** – **Doris Day** always gets her moment.

What, if push comes to shove, is your all-time favourite album?

I consider running and music my go-to therapy. So you might spot me in the streets of north London bellowing to **David Bowie**'s *Young Americans*. I *love* the absolute epicness of the songs and the sentiment.

What was the first record you ever bought? And where did you buy it?

I grew up in a household with three generations of music lovers, so there was always a fight to have your turn on the Dansette. When I finally joined in as the youngest it was with Rock On, a genius song by **David Essex**. I bought it in Woolworths and I still have it and listen to it today.

Which musician, other than yourself, have you ever wanted to be?

Well, when I started out I wanted to be **Siouxsie Sioux** or **Debbie Harry**. And I'd love to know what it would feel like to have been **Prince**.

What do you sing in the shower?

Donna Summer, it's an amazing way to warm up. Steam and high notes. Occasionally, I can't help but revisit school choir hymns – Ave Maria is worth knowing.

What is your favourite Saturday night record?

Empires And Dance, **Simple Minds**. I love my emotional connection with it.

And your Sunday morning record?

You can't beat **Billie Holiday** to make you believe the world is a truly interesting place. God Bless The Child makes me weep every time.

Altered Images' new LP Mascara Streakz is out August 26 on Cooking Vinyl.

ALL BACK TO MY PLACE

THE STARS REVEAL THE SONIC DELIGHTS GUARANTEED TO GET THEM GOING...

Hollie Cook

LOVERS ROCKER, EX-SLIT

What music are you currently grooving to?

I've really been enjoying **Ibeyi** a lot – I love their new singles and it's prompted me to revisit their previous albums. I'm also still loving **Little Simz**'s *Sometimes I Might Be Introvert* as well.

What, if push comes to shove, is your all-time favourite album?

It's an impossible question but the one that springs to mind is *Frank* by **Amy Winehouse**. I seem to know it back to front, word for word. At the time I wasn't really into jazz, and this record eased me in.

What was the first record you ever bought? And where did you buy it?

Fabrice Bourgelle

Spice Girls' Wannabe, and it would have been from my local Our Price. I still remember the very first time I heard it – I'd never been so excited about anything! I'd spend all weekend at my friends' houses on the same street watching MTV, and we all completely freaked out, jumping off chairs and screaming [to it].

Which musician, other than yourself, have you ever wanted to be?

I'd take **Rihanna**. An absolute superstar musician, and a brilliant businesswoman, and one of the coolest and most beautiful humans out there.

What do you sing in the shower?

Songs from musicals, the kind of thing I'd never sing in front of anyone else. It's entirely not the kind of thing I'm good at, but for fun I like a big belty ballad. Out Here On My Own from Fame is a favourite.

What is your favourite Saturday night record?

They're forever changing. I'm honestly not even sure I've had a traditional Saturday night in ages. These days it's probably a few drinks in the kitchen with friends, making food and listening to tunes, from **The Chemical Brothers**' Got To Keep On to **Donald Byrd**, Love Has Come Around.

And your Sunday morning record?

The Joubert Singers' Stand On The Word. I'm not religious, but certain gospel music touches my soul. This song sends me into a frenzy of energy.

Hollie Cook's Happy Hour is released by Merge on June 24.

Al Stewart

YEAR OF THE CAT PERSON

What music are you currently grooving to?

I thought it would be nice to have one new one and one old one – so, **Olivia Rodrigo** and **The Band**. I love Good 4 U by Olivia Rodrigo, that's my favourite song by her.

What, if push comes to shove, is your all-time favourite album?

I'm going to say *Bringing It All Back Home* by **Bob Dylan**. It's just the most incredible record, and I love everything about it.

What was the first record you ever bought? And where did you buy it?

I was staying with my grandfather in Goring, just outside of Worthing of all places, at the time and it was a 78, and so it's got to be really early. Now I can't guarantee that it was the absolute first record I ever bought, but I believe that it was Don't You Rock Me Daddy-O by **Lonnie Donegan & His Skiffle Group**. That still sounds good and it has the most wonderful drum breaks.

Which musician, other than yourself, have you ever wanted to be?

Either **Hank B. Marvin**, because I could play all his stuff when I was young, or **Django Reinhardt**. And I most certainly could not play all of Django's songs!

> "I love Good 4 U by Olivia Rodrigo."
>
> AL STEWART

What do you sing in the shower?

The answer to this is, I don't sing in the shower. I do sometimes compose song lyrics, however, so I'm usually thinking of words.

What is your favourite Saturday night record?

Well, when I was a lot younger and more agile it would either have been something by **Eddie Cochran** or **Buddy Holly**.

And your Sunday morning record?

I've got to get this in somewhere and so I'm going to say *Liege & Lief* by **Fairport Convention**. All of this is just off the top of my head and if you asked me tomorrow then probably all the questions would have different answers.

Al Stewart's 50-disc super-deluxe box set The Admiralty Lights: Complete Studio, Live And Rare 1964-2009 is released by Madfish on June 3.

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Madman across the Water
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Theories, rants, etc.

MOJO welcomes correspondence for publication.
E-mail to: mojoreaders@bauermedia.co.uk

THERE IS APPARENTLY A COCKTAIL called Tiger On Vaseline available in a London bar these days: a remodelled Piña Colada that, among other things, involves roasted pineapple juice. Perhaps you don't have one to hand? No matter – a pint of milk will do just as well, as you'll hopefully join us in raising a glass to one of our very finest.

Auspicious birthdays demand auspicious celebrations, and that's what we've tried to arrange for this special edition of MOJO to mark Ziggy Stardust turning 50. His conception date is a little hazy, as is the way of these things. But *Ziggy* was delivered in physical form to British record stores on June 16, 1972, precipitating a short life and epic afterlife that has resonated more than those of most real superstars over the last five decades.

Our guestlist is illustrious, featuring as it does two Spiders, a rock'n'roll-ready producer, an accommodating roadie, key eyewitnesses from Detroit's Masonic Temple and Aylesbury's Friars Club, an ultra-ambitious manager and, more ambitious still, Ziggy's elusive "interpreter, negotiator and head mistress", Angie Bowie. "If you don't want to conquer the world, don't waste my fucking time," she remembers. The thing is, he didn't waste *anyone*'s time…

JOHN MULVEY, EDITOR

The bank want a drug screen for everybody on the boat

I've been a subscriber since issue 2, and whilst I've appreciated some great stuff in MOJO over the years, nothing has made me happier than the Grateful Dead piece in MOJO 343. As a Deadhead in England for over 50 years, it's great to still hear stories that I've not heard before. After all these years, Grayson Haver Currin's intro outlining the issues around transporting and setting up the sound system explains Bob Weir's comment about "jet breath" on the original album. It's never too late to learn! And the CD is beautifully done – any chance of MOJO's Picks becoming a regular feature? Many, many thanks.

Ray Leary, via e-mail

Don't point that gun at him, he's an unpaid intern

Nice to see the piece on Cyril Davies' demise [MOJO 339], and by and large your account is correct. Long John Baldry did mark Cyril's demise by honouring a booking the very next night at Eel Pie Island, but it was at that gig Baldry announced the All-Stars were henceforth to be known as The Hoochie Coochie Men. The story of Baldry subsequently encountering Rod Stewart that same night on Twickenham station is now well-known. However, the idea that LJB was supported that night by "Jeff Beck And The Tridents" is unlikely. Seven years or so ago, Tridents founder member Paul Lucas supplied me with dates of their Eel Pie Island appearances, and the earliest was in May 1964. Jeff Beck did not join them until the end of August, or definitely September 1964 (he was appearing with his pre-Tridents outfit The Nightshift at that year's National Jazz And Blues Festival in August). If Jeff was supporting LJB that January, it would have to have been with The Nightshift, but it's not a date I'm aware of… yet!

Pete Watt, 'Head Muso', Eel Pie Island Museum, Twickenham

I'm going to have to start locking my effing door

I just wanted to say how much I really appreciate your magazine and the free CD. I have been a subscriber for goodness knows how long and I really look forward to receiving the mag and the CD. Thanks to you, I have been introduced to a whole new world – some familiar, some not. Your most recent free CD [MOJO 342] included a track

➢

◄ by The West Coast Pop Art Experimental Band which, in spite of my love for psych, I had never heard of before. Thanks! I am really interested in '60s/'70s protest songs and A Child Of A Few Hours Is Burning To Death just gave me so much more new info about yet another band who dared to sing out against the corruption in the US at the time. Thank you most sincerely MOJO for enriching my life. Keep it up!

Terry Bloxham, via e-mail

I wanted to give you a heads-up on what I thought of the piece

I received the MOJO 342 in mid-March and opened it on March 17 and looked at the contents. Why is this of significance, you may ask? On this day, Jews around the world were reading the Book Of Esther from the Bible in celebration of the Purim festival. As some may know, Esther succeeded Queen Vashti on the Persian throne. Then looking at the contents I see on page 40 an interview with Vashti Bunyan. Coincidence? I am still in shock. Was heaven sending me a message? As I result I had no choice but to renew my MOJO subscription!

David Dwek, Jerusalem, Israel

You just charted us on a course through unprotected waters

In a review of the forthcoming T. Rex box set [MOJO 342] I was amused by the comment that the band were The Beatles for a generation too young to experience Beatlemania. On my tenth birthday in November 1962, I inherited my first record player from a cousin. Initially a big Cliff and The Shadows fan, the emergence of The Beatles changed everything. However, the love of more guitar-fuelled music meant that the Stones and The Yardbirds were as important to me as The Beatles. My first live concerts in 1965 and 1967 were typical packages of the era featuring the Stones, The Hollies, Spencer Davis Group and Goldie & The Gingerbreads. As a Yardbirds fan I bought Led Zeppelin's debut on the day of release and I was blown away. I was now into concert-going in a big way and saw Zeppelin in 1971.

However, I have never been blinkered when it comes to music, and I bought *Electric Warrior*, which to this day I rate as an all-time classic. So at the ripe old age of 19 I had lived through Beatlemania – which makes the notion that T. Rex were for another generation of music lovers a ridiculous statement. My friend and myself saw T. Rex twice in 1971 and then again in 1972. Unfortunately the 1972 gig was the parting of the ways for the band and myself. The fact that Marc Bolan seemed totally uninterested in playing his guitar made the concert a damp squid. This coincided with the fact that I found *The Slider* album a poor follow-up to *Electric Warrior*. I continued to buy the excellent singles but wasn't surprised when Bolan's career wilted. Unlike David Bowie, who killed the band after 18 months and went on to become one of the biggest megastars of all time, Bolan trod the same path too long and paid the price.

Jack Haynes, Manchester

It's a scientific community, man

Another great issue. The movie quotes headlining the letters in MOJO 343's Theories, Rants, Etc are all from Chinatown starring Jack Nicholson, Faye Dunaway and a particularly chilling John Huston. The main plot centres on the illegal irrigation of orange groves in the San Fernando valley using water covertly diverted from Los Angeles' own water supply, thus creating an oasis exclusively for the rich and powerful landowners. I'm guessing that's the link with Liam Gallagher, formerly of Oasis? Having seen Chinatown so often that I have memorised it, the quotes were easy to recognise.

Ru Rahman, Uxbridge

I don't have a problem with objective reporting

How disappointing to see the talentless and, frankly, unpleasant Liam Gallagher on the cover of MOJO 343. Surely the likes of Andy Partridge, Roy Harper, Robyn Hitchcock and Paddy McAloon (to name a few) would be far more deserving of this honour, given their contribution to English music over the past 50-odd years? Enjoyed the Grateful Dead CD though.

Steve Richards, Surrey

Do you mind if I butter you up a little before I answer that question?

I've read MOJO for several decades now. The magazine is nearly 30 years old, and often I'm searching for a particular one I remember of, but it's tough to find it. So I wonder: is there an index of MOJO articles? Has anyone already done this and could share it? If not, could we create some kind of collective group of 20 or 30 people working on this, each person taking a whole year to describe each issue? Please help on this, it would be a wonderful improvement.

Philippe, France

Hi Philippe, if you're part of our MOJO Membership scheme (see page 30), you'll find our new MOJO app has a searchable database of recent issues, and an archive of MOJOs going back to 2015. We're working on ways you'll be able to access older content, too: more news on that soon.

John

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20:05:2022

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*WHAT'S ON LONDON ******

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WHAT GOES ON!

THE HOT NEWS AND BIZARRE STORIES FROM PLANET **MOJO**

Both Ends Burning

An autumn tour, 50th birthday frolics, and a book of singer Bryan Ferry's lyrics: it's all go for **Roxy Music.**

IF NEWS of Roxy Music's first full reunion tour since 2011 came as a surprise to fans and music journalists, they weren't the only ones.

"I've been sort of locked down here in West Sussex, quite near to where Bryan [Ferry] is actually," relates Roxy guitarist Phil Manzanera. "I've been popping over, occasionally playing on some of his solo stuff – bits that he inevitably takes off... And one day, he just said, 'Fancy doing some gigs?' *Whaaat?!*"

Getty (4)

This was shortly before Christmas 2021, as the 50th anniversary of the band's eponymous futuristic debut album loomed. "So yes," continues Manzanera, "if there's a year to celebrate, this is it."

Manzanera talks to MOJO between shifts of woodshedding. Not in an actual shed – "That would be to do it a disfavour" – but a garden den overlooking banana trees and *Trachycarpus*, an aptly cosmopolitan view for a man raised all over Latin America, and where he's perusing the multi-tracks of the tour's likely set list, getting back up to speed on *For Your Pleasure*'s In Every Dream Home A Heartache.

"I feel bad about this as a musician," he says, "but as a punter at a gig I want to hear exactly what I heard on the record. I want to hear the solos the way they were. So if Eno treated my guitar part on Dream Home, I've got to figure out a way to get that sound."

Early Roxy's sonic terrorist Brian Eno won't be joining the tour. Manzanera says they've given up asking and, after all, Eno was in the band for just one and a half out of the 50 years being commemorated. "What would he do for the songs he wasn't on?" muses Manzanera. "Just hang around? It would be a bit beneath him."

Still, the core team on six out of eight Roxy Music albums will be present: Ferry,

There's a new sensation…: (below) Roxy Music on-stage at the Royal College Of Art studio, July 5, 1972; (right) reunited at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony, March 29, 2019; (right, below, from left) inductees Phil Manzanera, Bryan Ferry, Andy Mackay and Eddie Jobson; (bottom) Roxy in 1972.

Manzanera, sax/oboist Andy Mackay and drummer Paul Thompson. The latter joins MOJO from his home in the North-east, also mid-practice (the strains of the debut album's paradigm-shifting opener Re-Make/Re-Model can be heard as he's called to the phone). He's drummed on all the Roxy tours since the beginning of their 21st century rapprochement – shows in 2001, 2003, 2005-6 and 2010-11 – but missed their most recent get-together, 2019's Rock and Roll Hall of Fame induction, with a sore neck. It's a reminder that touring gets no easier as rock musicians enter their seventies.

"I never thought I'd still be getting up on stage at my age now," says Thompson, who's been keeping himself limber drumming with Lindisfarne, "but the passion for it never leaves you, really. If I had to stop for any reason, it would be really difficult to deal with, I think."

The itinerary – three UK arena shows in Glasgow, Manchester and London, plus 10 in North America – is the work of Ferry's agent, who flagged up the potential demand in the States and Canada. "Much to our amazement," adds Manzanera, who still recalls Roxy's early struggles over the pond: "playing Re-Make/Re-Model and The Bob, despite having water bombs thrown at us while being called faggots and what have you."

The guitarist is hoping for more positive audience energy this time. "In fact, I want people to come dressed up, glammed up!" he says. "I want to see people in feathers, in tribute to Eno."

Support act for the North America shows will be St. Vincent, another artist who knows how to strike a pose.

"She's insanely perfect," Manzanera agrees. "Obviously, as a guitar player, I'm going to have to up my game. And, you know, if *her* audience dresses up, as well as ours, what fun we're gonna have…"

> "I want to see people in feathers, in tribute to Eno."
> **PHIL MANZANERA**

FERRY TURN FOR THE LOWDOWN ON ROXY'S LYRICS AND BRYAN'S NEW BOOK.

"Light and shade is important in most art, especially music": (left) Bryan Ferry reverts to type in the mid '70s; (above) lyrics to Avalon, from Ferry's new book; (below) Bryan in 2014.

ROXY MUSIC's golden jubilee bears more surprising fruit in the shape of singer Bryan Ferry's first book of lyrics, published by Chatto & Windus this month. 'Surprising' because, amid the globetrotting travelogue and post-party ennui that made the singer's name and minted his lounge lizard image, there are much stranger songs and poignant signs of sentimentality beneath the suaveness. Even Ferry himself has been given pause.

"I notice there are a lot of sad songs in there," he tells MOJO today, "but I've always been drawn to shades of blue. Most of my songs are personal in nature, and mood and atmosphere play an important role."

As he transitioned from bedroom poet in Washington, County Durham to post-modern pop star, via art school epiphanies, Ferry's songwriting models were from the top drawer.

"As a young jazz fan I listened to lots of the great American songs," he says. "Cole Porter's songs impressed me with their sophistication and emotional range. Later, a lot of powerful songs came out of Stax and Motown that caught the pulse of the moment and drew me in. Then came The Beatles and reflective singer-songwriters like Bob Dylan and Neil Young. All these people touched me with their music."

Off the page, the range of Ferry's ideas is striking. There are references to Macbeth and King Lear, even boldly Christian imagery in the eerily intense Psalm, from *Stranded*, and Triptych, from *Country Life*.

"Many of my musical heroes had been influenced by gospel music," Ferry explains. "But Triptych was more a nod to my art student days, looking at Renaissance paintings…"

More echoes of Ferry's '60s art education resound on his slow-burning satire of post-war consumer mores, In Every Dream Home A Heartache. Was it at least partly a tribute to Ferry's former art teacher, pop artist Richard Hamilton, and his famous collage, 'Just what is it that makes today's homes so different, so appealing?'.

"There's definitely a connection," says Ferry, "and Hamilton's work was an important influence on me and my generation. I probably wouldn't have written Dream Home if I hadn't been so immersed in American pop culture."

It's not the only Ferry song about what's real and what's fake, what's lasting versus what's fleeting. Was he weighing up the pros and cons?

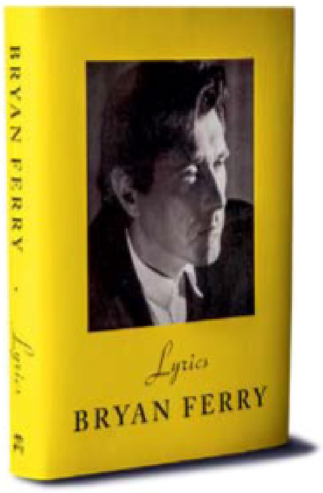
"Can't you have both?" he asks. "Balance has always interested me, and light and shade is important in most art, especially music."

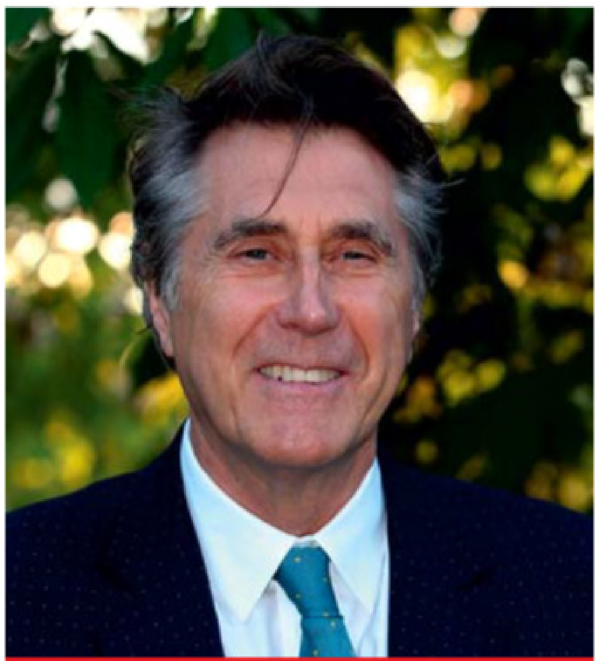
And if he had to choose one of these lyrics as his legacy, what would it be?

"Today's favourite would have to be Mother Of Pearl. One of those rare cases where I felt I got it right. But perhaps I should really choose More Than This, because its success paid for all the others."

Danny Eccleston

Lyrics by Bryan Ferry is published by Chatto & Windus, priced at £20.





"I've always been drawn to shades of blue."
BRYAN FERRY

Getty

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A Brazil wind: Built To Spill do the Boise reshuffle (from left) Doug Martsch, João Casaes, Lê Almeida.

IDAHO INDIE-STARGAZERS BUILT TO SPILL GO BRAZILIAN FOR LP 10

CELEBRATING 30 years of psychedelic, progressive indie rock, Idaho institution Built To Spill has been in a state of flux since long-serving sidemen Bret Netson and Jim Roth exited in 2015. And that's the way singer/guitarist Doug Martsch likes it.

"Playing with different people and making different kinds of records is what I want to do," he explains. "David Bowie was a hero of mine – every record of his was a completely different thing, with different collaborators. I want to follow in his footsteps."

Built To Spill's forthcoming tenth album, *When The Wind Forgets Your Name*, is rooted in one of these periodic reshuffles. In autumn 2018, with the group's first Brazilian tour on the horizon, Martsch swapped out his existing rhythm section to work with drummer Lê Almeida and bassist João Casaes, of Brazilian psychedelic collective Oruã.

"They're punk rock kids," says Martsch. "They grew up listening to Guided By Voices, but they also have lots of subtle Brazilian influences. They're not afraid to try weird things, and I loved their production ideas."

The Brazilian shows proved such a blast that Martsch invited Almeida and Casaes to accompany him on a US tour the following year, teaching them a crop of new songs he'd penned. At tour's end, they spent a few weeks recording the songs at Martsch's Boise, Idaho rehearsal space.

A plan to meet again for mixing and overdubbing was scuppered by Covid, and Martsch completed the album on his own instead. "I was supposed to tour a lot in 2020, so who knows if I'd even have finished the album if the coronavirus hadn't happened," he deadpans. "It was pretty lonely. I was living alone through the pandemic, bummed-out by the whole experience."

Thankfully, the album itself is no bummer. The dubby sonics of Rocksteady, for example, showcase Martsch's love of reggae, while other songs find him tripping in his dreams ("I've dreamt of being on acid more times than I've actually been on acid," he quips), and finding powerful metaphors in '70s daredevil Evel Knievel's infamous failure to clear Snake River Canyon on his Skycycle. "Knievel attempted that stunt in my hometown of Twin Falls when I was six," Martsch says. "I like the idea of his failure, the image of him floating down the canyon in a rocket."

While Almeida and Casaes contributed ideas of their own and occasional overdubs from afar, their places in the group have now been taken by Teresa Esguerra (drums) and Melanie Radford (bass). "We're having a lot of fun, and I have no intention of changing the line-up again for a while," says Martsch, still eager for new collaborations. "Though I'd love to play and record with Sam Coomes and Janet Weiss of [Portland indie-rock duo] Quasi, who are heroes of mine, and good friends."

Stevie Chick

> "I like the idea of Evel Knievel's failure..."
> **DOUG MARTSCH**

FACT SHEET

Title: *When The Wind Forgets Your Name*

Due: September 9

Songs: Gonna Lose/ Fool's Gold/ Understood/ Elements/ Rocksteady/ Spiderweb/Never Alright/Alright/ Comes A Day

The Buzz: "By the time you're 50, you have a pretty good idea of what your strengths and weaknesses are. I used to use overdubs as a crutch, to cover what I felt were inferior performances. On this record, I took the overdubs just as far as I needed to." *Doug Martsch*

ALSO WORKING

...**Peter Doherty** told the Far Out website that **THE LIBERTINES** planned to record new music produced by Andrew Loog Oldham in Bogota, Colombia last month... **BRIX SMITH** releases her solo LP *Valley Of The Dolls* later this year. With contributors including My Bloody Valentine's **Deb Googe** (right), Bangle **Susanna Hoffs** and **Siobhan Fahey** of Bananarama, it was co-written and produced by **Youth** ...**Colin Blunstone** says a new **ZOMBIES** album is ready for release. "Because of the pandemic, everything has taken so much longer," he told Creative Loafing, adding that keyboardist **Rod Argent** had written "some real cracking songs" ...**RON SEXSMITH** releases *The Vivian Line* early next year. Named for a rural route near his home in Ontario, it was recorded in Nashville with bassist **Brad Jones**: "it's a very lush-sounding almost baroque pop record," says Ron. "The songs were mostly inspired by this stage in life... and trying to figure it all out" ...**HOT CHIP** say new LP *Freakout/Release*, out in August, took inspiration from the Beastie Boys' Sabotage ...**NEW ORDER** are preparing to follow-up 2015's *Music Complete*. **Phil Cunningham** posted: "Shapes of things to come... we are in the studio writing" ... **GRAHAM COXON** and **ROSE ELINOR DOUGALL** have formed **The Waeve**, and new material is pending ... it's been reported **JIMMY CLIFF** (left) is to reprise his role of Rhygin in a sequel to reggae movie classic The Harder They Come. He'll also record new songs for the soundtrack...

Getty (2)

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TESS PARKS

AND THOSE WHO WERE SEEN DANCING

FUZZ CLUB RECORDS LP / CD

Following a number of collaborations with Brian Jonestown Massacre's Anton Newcombe, Toronto-born, London-based psych pop artist Tess Parks returns with her first solo album in nearly a decade.

AL LOVER

COSMIC JOKE

FUZZ CLUB RECORDS LP / CD

'Cosmic Joke' is the latest album from Los Angeles based producer Al Lover and trades in a warped, psychedelic electronica that pools together trip-hop, synthesised krautrock, dub and dark ambient.

VACANT GARDENS
UNDER THE BLOOM

VACANT GARDENS

UNDER THE BLOOM / OBSCENE

TOUGH LOVE LP / CD

Reissues of the 2 Vacant Gardens albums, first released in 2020/21 in swiftly-disappearing micro editions on the secretive Tall Texan label. The duo of Glenn Donaldson & Jem Janvu combine heavy fuzz & slow-mo drum machine beats with gentle almost trad-folk style vocals.

RUBBER OH

STRANGE CRAFT

ROCKET RECORDINGS LP / CD

Incredible debut album from Sam Grant of Pigs Pigs Pigs Pigs Pigs Pigs Pigs – 12 songs of bass driven, interstellar psych pop with help from band mates, Du Blonde and other space cadets.

Barzin
Voyeurs in the Dark

BARZIN

VOYEURS IN THE DARK

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JO SCHORNIKOW

JO SCHORNIKOW

ALTAR

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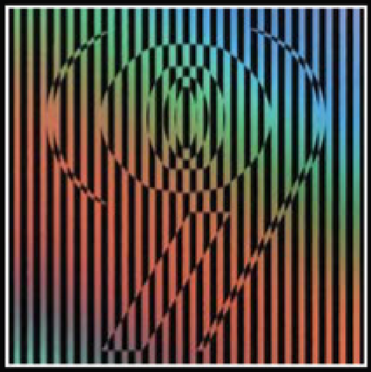
MALKA SPIGEL

GLIDING & HIDING

SWIM LP / CD

'Gliding & Hiding' gathers together Spigel's (bassist and vocalist with the legendary Minimal Compact) gorgeous 2014 'Gliding' EP, with reworked tracks from the 1994 mini-album 'Hide'.



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Debut art-rock album project from Moaning's (Sub Pop) founding member Pascal Stevenson. RIYL: Moaning, Wire/Colin Newman's solo work, early Brian Eno, Cate Le Bon, Crack Cloud, Japan, Deerhunter & Iceage.

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ROCK'N'ROLL CONFIDENTIAL

She's a rebel: Darlene Love takes care of her own business.

Getty

DARLENE LOVE

The singer with **The Blossoms**, **The Crystals** and more talks Elvis, Lethal Weapon and Phil Spector.

BORN IN 1941, Darlene Wright started singing in high school in Los Angeles. She later brought gospel sass and power to Phil Spector's Wall Of Sound with her declamatory leads on The Crystals' 1962 smash He's A Rebel and solo singles (Today I Met) The Boy I'm Gonna Marry and Christmas (Baby Please Come Home). At the same time, as a member of The Blossoms, she sang back-up for The Ronettes, Righteous Brothers, Elvis and more. Recording solo from 1983, she's also appeared in musical theatre on Broadway and starred in the Lethal Weapon movie franchise. Throughout, she's heeded the lessons a six-decade-plus career imparts.

"Early on Phil Spector taught me you can't trust everyone," she says. "People try to cheat you out of your money, and you have to take care of your own business."

2022 marks 60 years since you hit the US Number 1 with He's A Rebel, though you were never a member of The Crystals.

People have said how I thought my name was going to be on that record, but I knew it wasn't. The Crystals were out of town and Phil Spector needed the song recorded. He knew The Blossoms and got us in. I got a $3,000 flat fee, which was way over the odds, for singing the lead. He sped the finished track up because he wanted me to sound younger, and he didn't want people to know I was black. He thought if people knew, we wouldn't sell as many records.

john lennon imagine

LOVE NOTES

Darlene's hot five.

1 **Dionne Warwick** *Don't Make Me Over* (STATESIDE, 1963)
2 **Sam Cooke** *You Send Me* (KEEN, 1957)
3 **Aretha Franklin** *Ain't No Way* (ATLANTIC, 1968)
4 **Mahalia Jackson** *Trouble Of The World* (PHILIPS, 1959)
5 **John Lennon** *Imagine* (APPLE, 1971)

Your father was a minister. Was it tricky making the transition into pop music?

R&B and rock'n'roll were the devil's music in our church. My sister [Edna Wright, Raelette and voice of Honey Cone] said they may as well hang a big sign up on the church that just says, "No!" We weren't allowed to go to dances or movies or shows, so when The Blossoms asked me to join it was a big deal. Wherever we went to sing I had to call my parents on the way, when I got there, and when I was leaving. We were always busy so there was a lot of calling. We were doing three sessions a day, making a lot of money. Phil didn't like it and would have stopped us if he could, but he couldn't, and we sang with Bobby Darin, Jan & Dean, Dionne Warwick, Tom Jones, Elvis on his '68 comeback special…

How was working with Elvis?

They wouldn't let him go nowhere by himself but when there was a break, he'd come sit with us and ask us to sing with him. He loved gospel music and we got to see a real personal side, a tender, soft one.

How did you end up in the Lethal Weapon films playing Trish Murtaugh, the wife of Danny Glover's Roger Murtaugh?

I was working at the Bottom Line in New York and one night Glenn Daniels, the casting director, came up and asked would I audition for a new movie with Danny and Mel Gibson in. I was a big fan of Mad Max. Turned out they wanted a black actress who was not famous in Hollywood. There was a lot of sitting around but there are people out there who only know me as Trish.

Your last album was 2018's *Darlene Sings Elvis And Other Favorites*. Are you planning a follow-up?

I'd love to do a gospel album and Stevie [Van Zandt, who produced Love's 2015 *Introducing Darlene Love*] wants to do another album. He's always championed me and he's a tiger in the recording studio.

Tell us something you've never told an interviewer before.

We were doing [1969 film] Change Of Habit with Elvis and we took a lunch break. I had left my sunglasses in the dressing room and went to get them and on the way back I passed Elvis's dressing room and we had a bit of a chat and then he said, "I need to ask you something… I've never had a black woman before and I'm just thinking I'd really like one." I don't know where it came from, but I said, "Well, honey, you ain't gonna have me," and I flew out of there.

As told to Lois Wilson

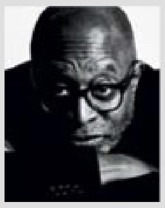
> "I was a big fan of Mad Max."
> **DARLENE LOVE**

The Many Sides Of Love: The Complete Reprise Recordings Plus! is out now on Real Gone Music.

LAST NIGHT A RECORD CHANGED MY LIFE

Brian Jackson

Gil Scott-Heron's collaborator and more salutes *Clifford Brown & Max Roach* (EmArcy, 1954)



I was four or five when my parents put on *Clifford Brown & Max Roach*. They were always playing jazz at home and I took to it from an early age – Ella Fitzgerald, Sarah Vaughan, Miles Davis – but I distinctly remember sitting in front of my parents' 15-inch speakers, rocking back and forth, to this: Joy Spring, Jordu, Duke Ellington's What Am I Here For?. But the song that really stayed with me and still does is Parisian Thoroughfare, their take on the Bud Powell standard.

Their playing of it really sounds like a big city, and the fact they were able to recreate that, I was immediately enchanted by the idea that you could make music that painted a picture. Even though I had never visited Paris, the music gave me this sense of it, and that really sparked my imagination and made me want to be a musician myself. Once I started playing, I kept returning to that idea of music creating images, the visual possibilities. It was a big influence, for example, on a track such as Winter In America [from 1975's *The First Minute Of A New Day* with Gil Scott-Heron]. With the flutter of the flute, I tried to paint a picture of the falling snow.

The New York Times called the band on the album, "perhaps the definitive bop group", and obviously there's Clifford Brown on trumpet and Max Roach on drums, but then you've got Harold Land on tenor sax, Richie Powell on piano and George Morrow on bass… they are intuitive, and the telepathy between Clifford and Max! His drumming also really spoke to me, and how he was at the forefront of the civil rights movement and black power as a musician.

So, I tried to follow in his footsteps. One of my proudest moments was when he came up to me after seeing me play and said how I was the real deal.

As told to Lois Wilson

His first new LP in 20 years, This Is Brian Jackson, is released on May 27 on BBE Music.

EmArcy
Clifford
BROWN
Max
ROACH
GEORGE MORROW
HAROLD LAND
RICHIE POWELL
DELILAH
PARISIAN THOROUGHFARE
THE BLUES WALK
DAAHOUD
JOY SPRING
JORDU
WHAT AM I HERE FOR

ROLL UP! FOR WEED BY GEORGE AND OTHER ROCK TOKERS

GEORGE HARRISON – or, actually, the estate of the most retiring Beatle – does not hope to get you high. Instead, a newly Harrison-branded blend of weed made without THC, or the stuff that gets you stoned, promises a "low dose and full toke, like George used to smoke". It's a throwback, as co-founder of California's Dad Grass company Ben Starmer puts it, to the milder sort of weed that might have once been rolled into joints on the hard cover of *All Things Must Pass* or, for that matter, during its sessions.

"We tend to shy away from the high-test, blow-your-mind weed that kids are into today," says Starmer. "Just a classic smoke for a classic bloke."

Arriving in a box that mimics a double-cassette edition of George's 1970 classic and reads 'All Things Must Grass' (a pun suggested by Harrison's son, Dhani), the effects of one of these Harrison-style spliffs unfurl like a lazy afternoon spent staring at treetops from a blanket in spring, not some wild roller-coaster between anxiety, oblivion, and imagination that a stronger joint might offer. A mix of hemps stuffed with CBD and CBG, two chemicals in cannabis without intense psychoactive effects, it's weed meant for going about the rest of your life. The THC content is so low it could pass in the UK, where it is, of course, unavailable.

Harrison is the first Beatle (or, for that matter, Traveling Wilbury) to get his own brand of weed, but he is far from the first rock star. As legalisation and decriminalisation have hopscotched among American states, scores of musicians – from the obvious, like Snoop Dogg and Willie Nelson, to the less stereotyped, like Jenny Lewis and Margo Price – have unrolled lines of pre-rolls and tinctures, salves and even sodas. David Crosby has promised a new line, while The Flaming Lips recently launched their own edible fleet, Love Yer Brain.

> **"Harrison-style spliffs unfurl like a lazy afternoon staring at treetops from a blanket in spring…"**

Where Willie's so-called Obama Kush might send you into space (or at least into an extended reverie about the very nature of space) relative to Harrison's milder gear, what most of these musician-led brands share is an individual aesthetic. It feels like you're buying a piece of merch from someone you already love, more LP purchase than MP3 stream. Harrison's Dad Grass, for instance, sports his signature beneath that album cover-slipcase, with a photo of his sylvan sanctuary at Friar Park lining the inside; you can even pick up a rolling tray sporting his visage.

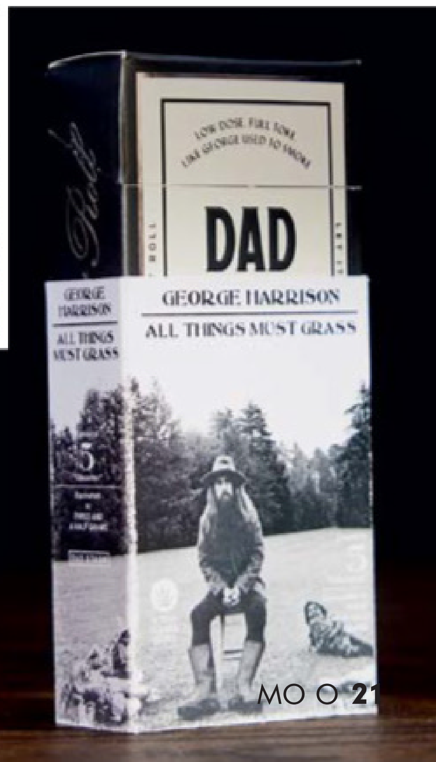
Steven Van Zandt, who launched his own relatively mellow 'Underground Apothecary' line of joints with Massachusetts dispensary Canna Provisions last autumn, agrees that the attention to detail is essential. He helped design the tins that store the stash, covered in lysergic swirls and winged nymphs. "Canna then created a very cool section in the store with lava lamps, vinyl records, and tie-dye tapestries," he says. "The artwork is very important, and it's something we are losing in the digital world."

However, Canna co-founder Meg Sanders sounds a note of caution for any budding cannabis entrepreneurs. "Getting a licensed celebrity on products is a minor percentage of what has to happen for this business to be successful," she says, citing the importance of artist events, press and branding. What's more, the patchwork of Stateside and international legality makes growth halting and tenuous. But if Van Zandt's stuff is only available, for now, in Canna's two Massachusetts stores, he's taking the long view – a portion of his sales goes toward national legalisation efforts.

Grayson Haver Currin.

Christopher Smith, Getty

ALL THINGS MUST GRASS
DAD GRASS



Let it roll: Harrison-branded THC-free All Things Must Grass weed, now available in America.

Heatseaker: Harvey Mandel keeps it on the level, Chicago, 1979; (below) on-stage with Canned Heat in 2015.

STILL RIGHTEOUS, ALMOST-STONE GUITAR GENIUS HARVEY MANDEL PLAYS ON

FEW PEOPLE still ask Harvey Mandel about the time he was almost the new Rolling Stone. Back in 1975, Mick Jagger called him in Los Angeles during the middle of the night and told him to get on the next plane to Munich, his guitar and gear in tow. He played the sizzling lead on Hot Stuff and the forlorn line of Memory Motel, but he ultimately lost the job to Ron Wood at Keith Richards' behest.

If you do ask Mandel about that missed career, he'll tell you he's mostly irked the band itself never bothered to tell him. Or that even now, they never call. "I've seen them a couple times since – come out, hang out, say hi, see the gig. But they never invite me to sit in with them and play those songs," says Mandel, laughing from his apartment in San Francisco's storied North Beach neighbourhood. "That would pay me thousands, because that's how they work."

Since the Detroit-born Mandel strummed his first E chord on a neighbour's guitar at 15 in Chicago, he has been, as he put it, "hypnotised" by the instrument and its possibilities. And his playing has put him in many remarkable situations, Stones included: after leaving Chicago for San Francisco in 1967 with Charlie Musselwhite's crackling South Side Band, his first West Coast work was a six-night stand at the Fillmore with Paul Butterfield and Cream, also making their California premiere. And there was his first gig with Canned Heat – Woodstock, where he arrived by helicopter and left by limo just before chaos prevailed.

Mandel thought Canned Heat could have been one of the great American rock institutions, but at least its disintegration led him to a fun run with John Mayall. "If Canned Heat would've stayed in that Woodstock line-up, we would've been great," he says. "But that's the problem with bands – the better the band, the crazier the individuals."

Indeed, Mandel has done some of his best, if more obscure, work outside of bands or the confines of rock and blues. Since 1968, he's made a string of white-hot solo albums with electric guitar and assorted outfits, licks based in a pyrotechnic kind of blues but liberated with an acid/jazz ideology.

Nicknamed 'The Snake' decades ago by keyboard eminence Barry Goldberg for his crinkly leather jacket, Mandel has ridden that nickname into albums titled *Snakes And Stripes* and 2016's *Snake Pit*, cut during two days with acolyte Ryley Walker's backing band. Of late, that same rhythm section has been feeding The Snake improvisations he's then manipulated with his home Pro Tools rig and turned into some of his most wild and righteous pieces ever. They'll be out, he hopes, on Tompkins Square by the year's end.

"It's absolutely some of the best guitar playing I've ever had on record," Mandel says. "Not only has my playing gotten better, but so have my electronic abilities. I can do it all now."

Grayson Haver Currin

Marking Harvey's 77th birthday, Who's Calling is out digitally now.

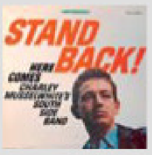
MANDEL HEALTH

Harvey's divine trinity.

Charlie Musselwhite's South Side Band

Stand Back!

(VANGUARD, 1967)



Just how unabashed has Mandel always been? Listen to 4 P.M., the second-side highlight of this foundational 1967 platter of electric blues. This mighty band immediately falls in behind the kid's cutting tone, as he plays joyous games with his sharp little riff. A marvel.

Harvey Mandel

The Snake

(JANUS, 1972)

All of Mandel's solo albums from the late '60s and early '70s move, but he might be having the most fun with these nine funk-rock powerhouses. It's like the M.G.'s surviving on trucker speed and guitar heroics.

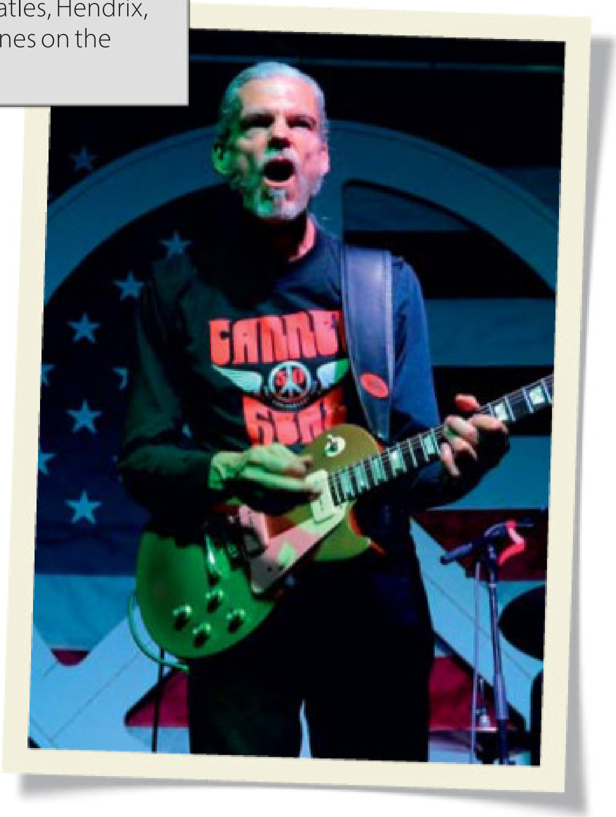
The Psychedelic Guitar Circus

The Psychedelic Guitar Circus

(RYKODISC, 1994)

It may take some digging, but nabbing a copy of this early-'90s convocation of guitar eccentrics – Mandel, Henry Kaiser, Steve Kimock – is worth the work, as they take Coltrane, The Beatles, Hendrix, and their own tunes on the strangest trips.

> "The better the band, the crazier the individuals."
> **HARVEY MANDEL**



Getty (2)

ELVIS COSTELLO & THE IMPOSTERS

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SAT / 11 JUNE / MANCHESTER OPERA HOUSE
MON / 13 JUNE / BIRMINGHAM SYMPHONY HALL
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WED 22 JUN BRIGHTON CENTRE	FRI 01 JUL SOUTHEND CLIFFS PAVILION	MON 11 JUL LIVERPOOL EMPIRE
FRI 24 JUN OXFORD NEW THEATRE	MON 04 JUL BIRMINGHAM SYMPHONY HALL	WED 13 JUL NEWCASTLE O2 CITY HALL
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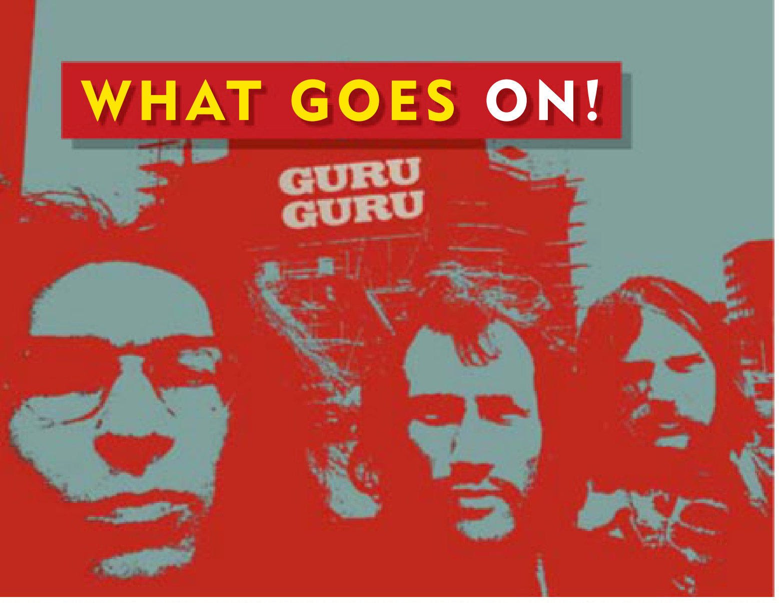

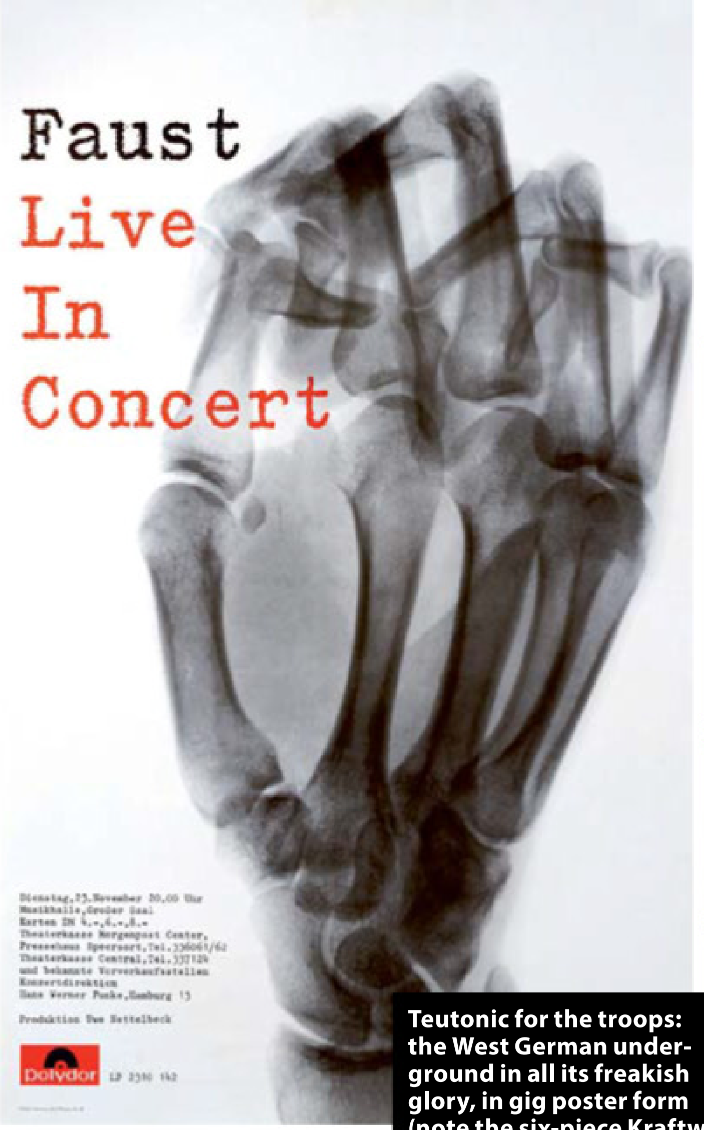
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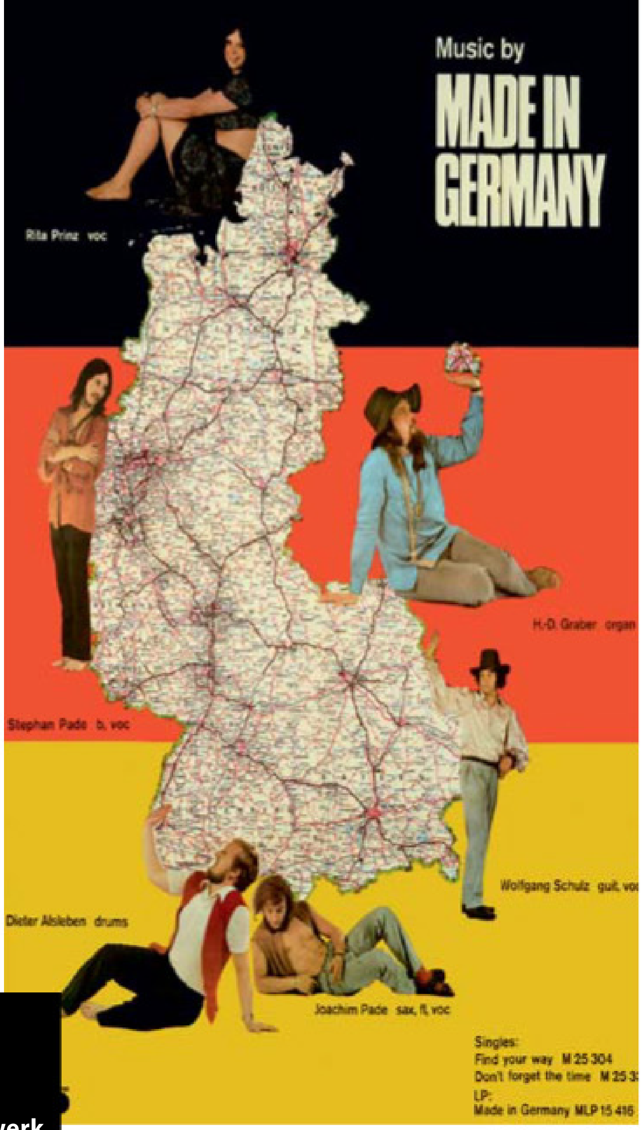
Polydor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Stephan Pade b, voc
H.-D. Graber organ
Wolfgang Schulz guit, voc
Dieter Alsleben drums
Joachim Pade sax, fl, voc
Singles:
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Don't forget the time
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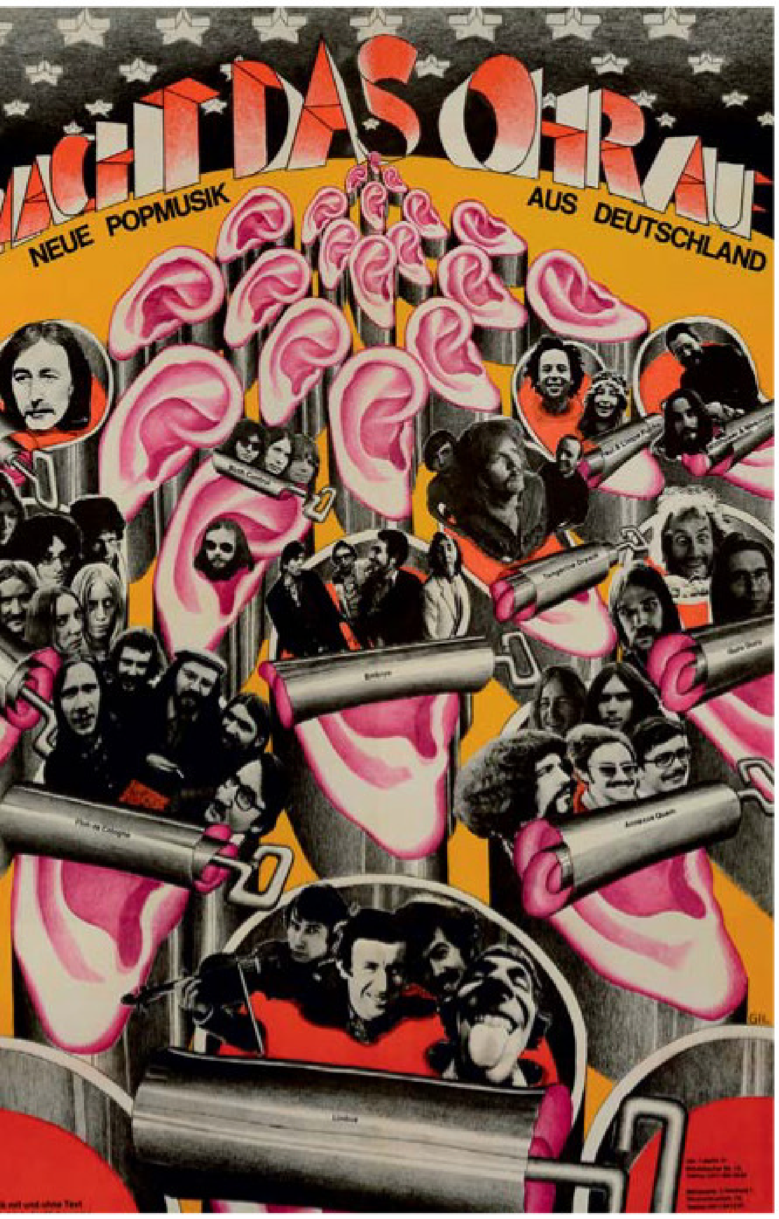
Teutonic for the troops: the West German underground in all its freakish glory, in gig poster form (note the six-piece Kraftwerk formation, below left).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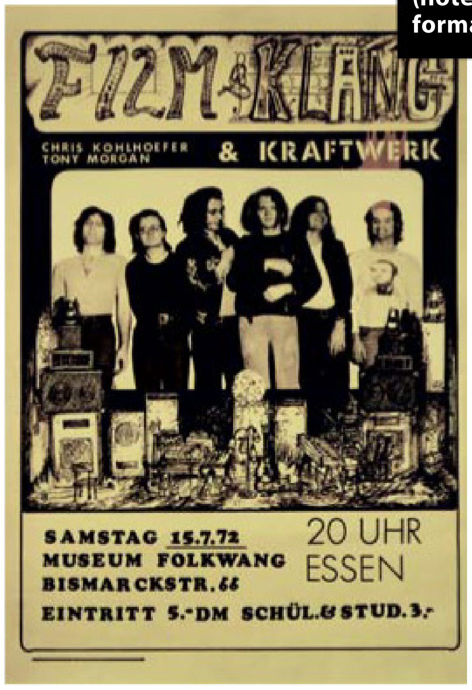
NEUE POPMUSIK
AUS DEUTSCHLAND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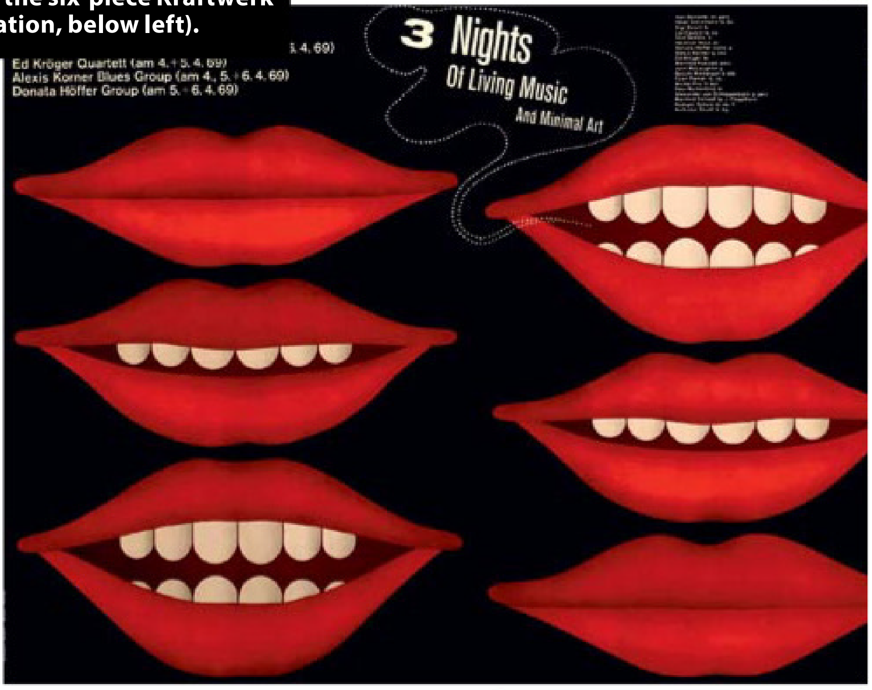
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Deutsche Wall

Beachtung! For a wild new book of vintage German rock posters.

AS MOJO WENT to press, one of Howard Devoto's original hand-rendered posters for a 1976 Sex Pistols/Buzzcocks gig sold for a cool £22,000. Further proof that the vintage concert bill demi-monde exerts a strange but undeniable pull, offering portals into legendary moments forever on the brink of explosion.

There are many such moments in new 192-page book German Underground Concert Posters 1968-1981 (Popdom), which features scarce playbills for gigs by Can, Faust, Neu!, Amon Düül II and other names familiar to Anglo audiences, plus others for lesser-known rockers including Hoity-Toity, Dog Breath, Missus Beastly and High Crack. Never intended to last, they offer novel perspectives on otherwise known quantities, revealing playful aspects to early Kraftwerk, for example, or illuminating the uncompromising radicalism of the era. A 1969 poster for an Agitation Free gig of 'Acid Rock Guerilla Rock' (sic) features two gas-masked, Molotov cocktail-waving urban fighters and promises 'Terror and Drugs'. As the foreword observes, the concert was stopped by the police.

Collecting the work of designers including Jürgen and Falk Rogner, Emil Schult, Jürgen Spohn and many others, the book was put together by Gerd Siekmann and Sebastian Köpcke. The former was introduced to West Germany's Kosmische scene when he was 13, after he saw Berlin's Birth Control play a youth club in 1972. "When the band plays, I feel electrified," he recalls. "A new universe opens up for me. Suddenly, I am part of the subculture… Krautrock has seduced me."

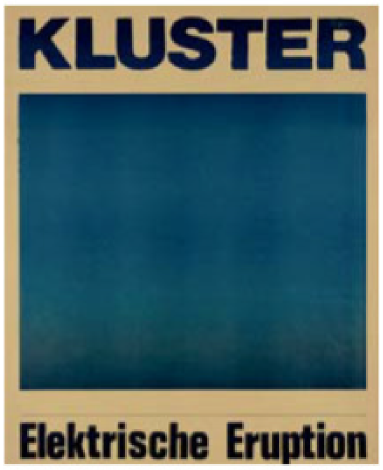
As well as private individuals, the posters were provided by musicians including the late Florian Schneider (Kraftwerk), Hans-Joachim Roedelius, Mani Neumeier (Guru Guru) and the Klaus Dinger Archive. They were "often made with the defiant courage of the self-taught individual," say the curators, who add, with winning understatement, "in this way, historic documents with their own charm were created."

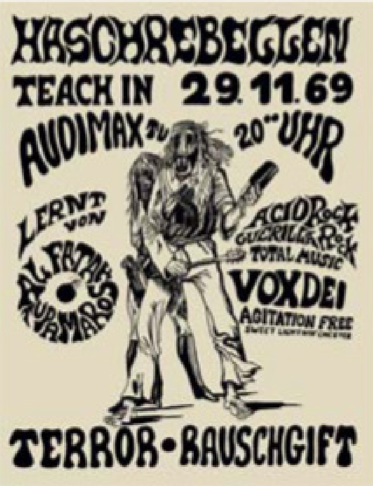
Ian Harrison

"A poster for 'Acid Rock Guerilla Rock'… promises 'Terror and Drugs.'"

German Underground Concert Posters 1968-1981 is available from www.popdom.de for €39,90 plus shipping.

Images courtesy Popdom


KLUSTER
Elektrische Eruption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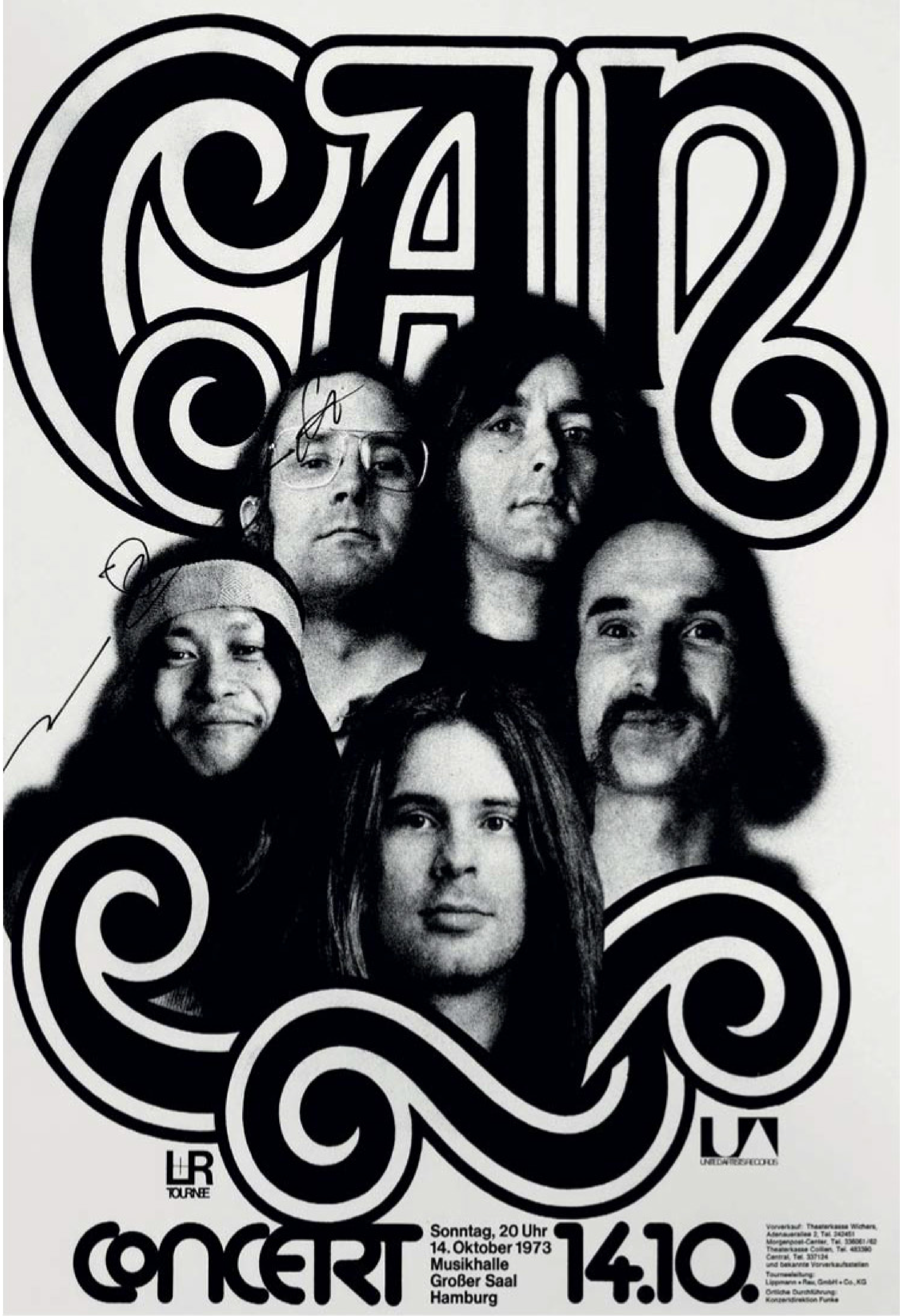
TEACH IN 29.11.69
AUDIMAX TU
20 UHR
LERNT VON AL FATAH
ACID ROCK GUERILLA ROCK
TOTAL MUSIC
VOXDEI
AGITATION FREE
TERROR • RAUSCHGIFT

Pop-Festival
total action weekend
Straubing
Christie
the sub · out of


CAN
LR TOURNEE
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CONCERT
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Großer Saal
Hamburg
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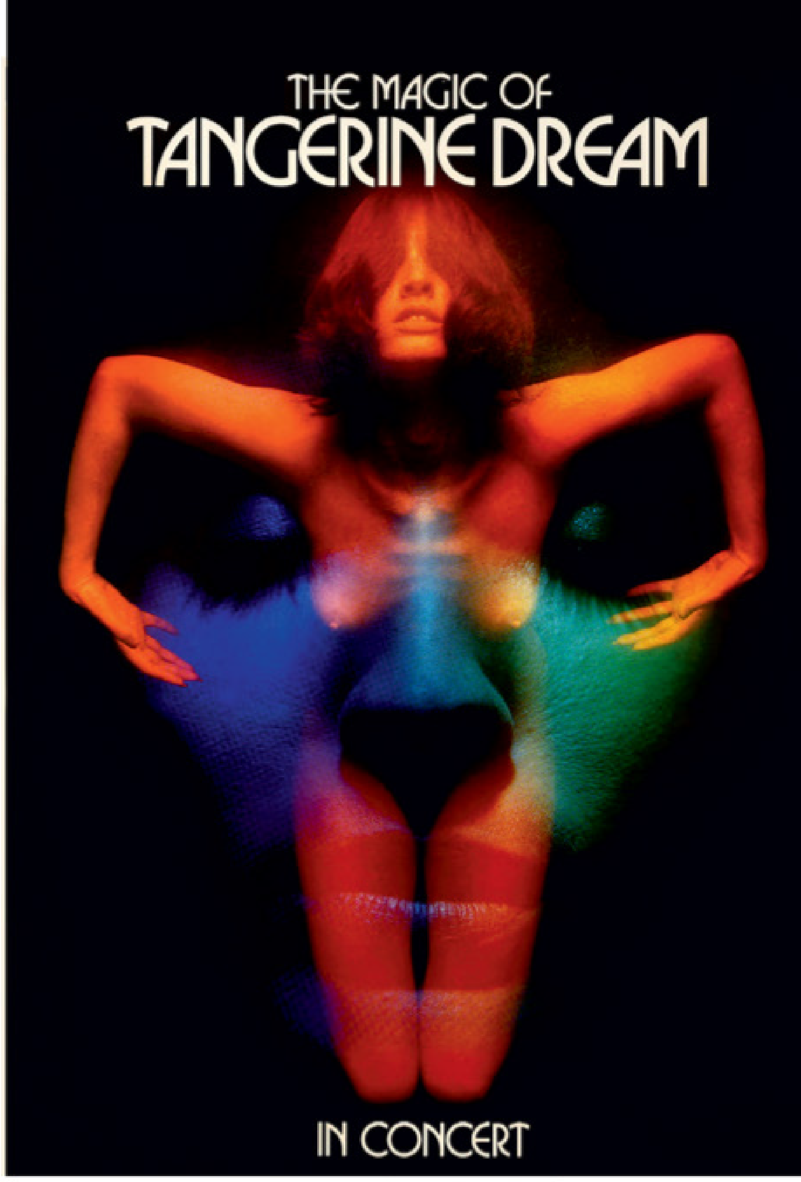
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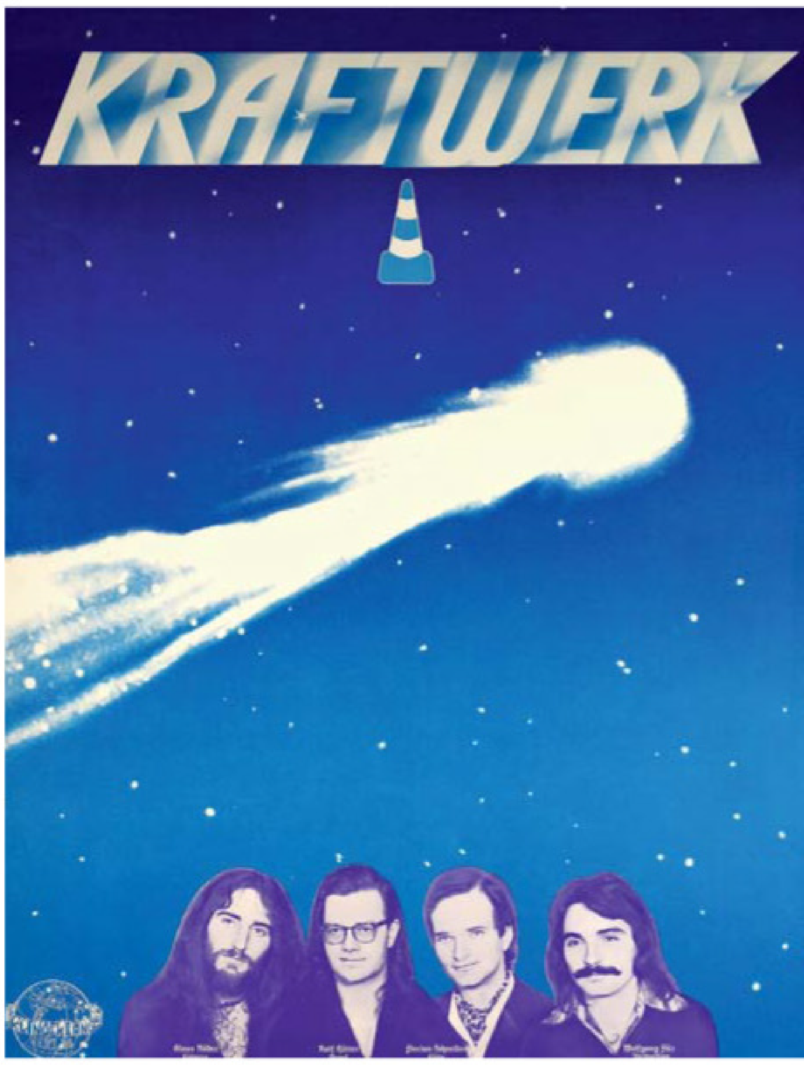
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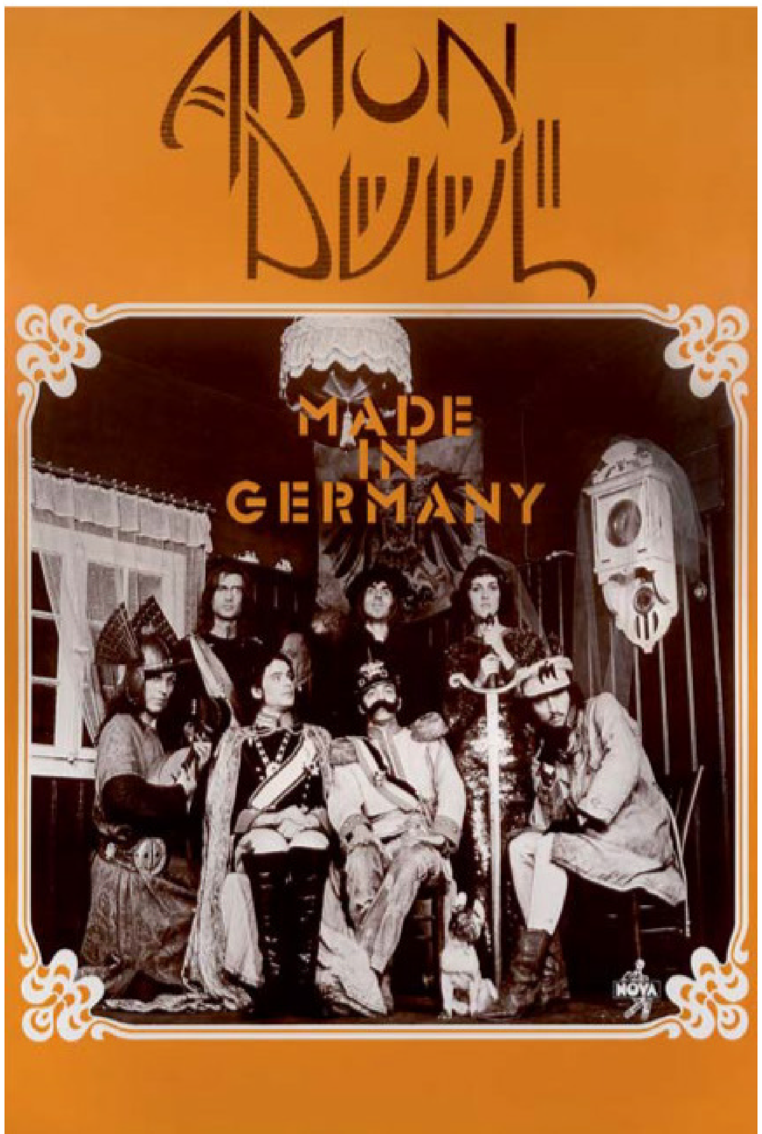
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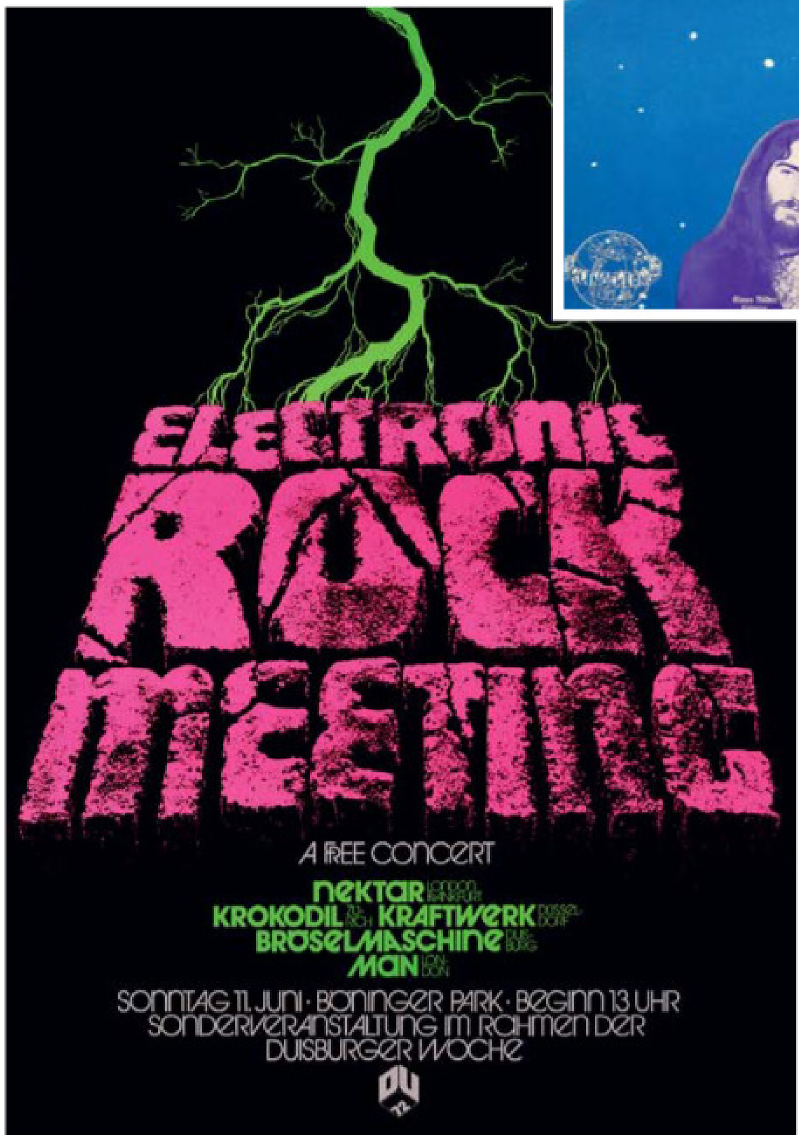
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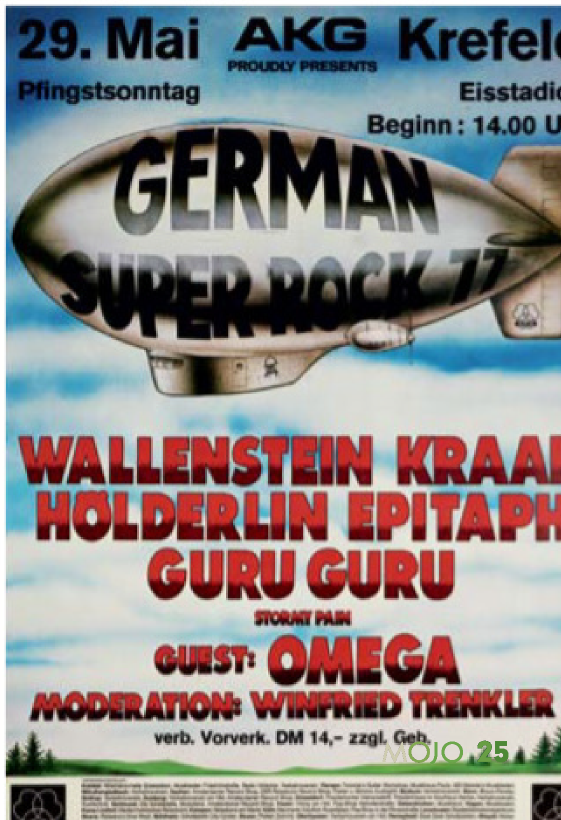
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Trunk load of faith: Ural Thomas packs up his troubles.

> “The music’s going to be healing.”
> **URAL THOMAS**

FIFTY YEARS ON, THE INSPIRATIONAL SECOND COMING OF URAL THOMAS, PORTLAND’S PILLAR OF SOUL

“I NEVER CARED about money, girls or fame,” says R&B veteran Ural Thomas. “Music always seemed so magical to me – it lifted my whole body up, so I felt like I was floating.” Thomas, now 82, initially called time on his professional music career over half a century ago, but you can’t keep a great voice down. Rescued from obscurity by drummer/DJ Scott Magee in 2013, Thomas is currently enjoying an unlikely comeback fronting his new band, The Pain.

Thomas’s course was set at an early age. His earliest memories are of listening beneath a pew as his preacher father sang in church, and as a teenager he’d sing doo wop with his schoolfriends in North Portland, Oregon. But while those friends got distracted by girls and drinking, Thomas kept his focus steady. “I wanted to make love with my music,” he says. “I decided to really do something with music. Then I got involved with the business side. And that turned me around.”

Thomas scored a local hit in Portland as a member of The Monterays with their 1964 debut Push ’Em Up. The group disintegrated soon afterwards but, under the wing of Jerry Goldstein (co-writer of My Boyfriend’s Back, and later manager of Sly Stone), Thomas relocated to LA and cut a handful of 7-inches in 1967, along with a concert record, 1968’s feverish *Can You Dig It… Live!*. Despite playing a reputed 44 shows at Harlem’s Apollo and opening for James Brown, Otis Redding and The Rolling Stones, the big time eluded the man audiences came to know as “Portland’s Pillar Of Soul”.

“The industry seemed to have already chosen the ones they wanted to make stars of, and it wasn’t me,” Thomas says. After one final bruising encounter with a label Thomas alleges rejected his demo tape, only to then steal his songs for their own artists, he decided he “couldn’t compete no longer.” Returning home to Portland he started a family and built himself a ramshackle house that was very much wired for sound. Indeed, jam sessions at the Thomas basement became a weekly institution for several decades.

“I didn’t even know he was still doing music, let alone living up the road,” says Magee, who spun Thomas’s 1967 single Can You Dig It? in his DJ sets, and was introduced to the dormant deep soul legend in 2013 by a mutual friend. Soon, Magee had assembled Thomas’s new group, The Pain. “Our aim was solely to sound like one of Ural’s old bands,” he says. “We were honouring his legacy. He wasn’t looking for some big comeback or anything.”

Nevertheless, Ural Thomas & The Pain’s eponymous 2016 debut, featuring re-recordings of his old material, stirred enough interest for a 2018 follow-up of new songs, while the forthcoming *Dancing Dimensions* is their strongest album yet. And this late life career-rejuvenation has lent Thomas’s story a redemptive arc he clearly relishes. “God put us together,” he says, of his (relatively) youthful bandmates. “We’re gonna sing from our hearts, and the music’s going to be a healing thing.”

Stevie Chick

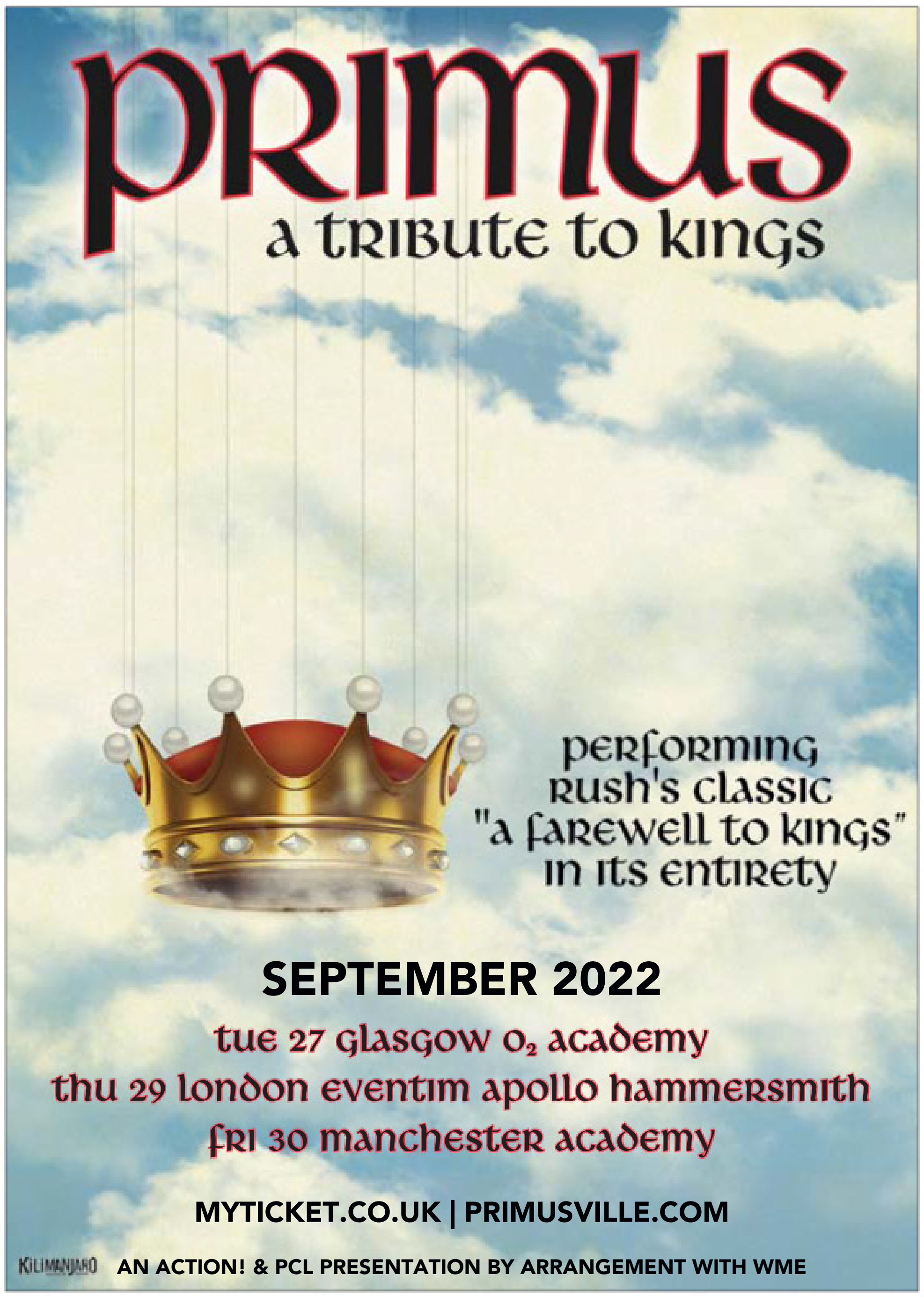
Dancing Dimensions is released by Bella Union on June 3.

FACT SHEET

- ● For fans of: James Brown, Sharon Jones & The Dap-Kings, Charles Bradley
- ● While Thomas has fond memories of meeting the Stones on their first tour of the US (“Mick and I hit it off right away, and Keith showed me some magic on his guitar”), experiences with some of his other heroes left a bitter taste. “My dream was to sing with James Brown and Otis Redding, but I found out they were bitter enemies, and it broke my heart. They were like spoiled kids, and I wanted no part of it.”
- ● Magee ascribes Thomas’s impeccably preserved voice to never having smoked, and only ever having drunk in moderation. “Also, he’s always chewing on osho root, which is a native American herbal medicine,” Magee adds. “I’m amazed he can hit that falsetto at 82.”

KEY TRACKS

- ● My Favourite Game
- ● Promises
- ● Apple Pie (Oh Me Oh My)



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Thursday 1 December
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24 NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY SU
25 INVERNESS THE BOTANIC HOUSE
27 GLASGOW ST LUKE'S
28 LEEDS BRUDENELL SOCIAL CLUB
29 NOTTINGHAM RESCUE ROOMS

JULY 2022
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02 LONDON ISLINGTON ASSEMBLY HALL
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L.A. BAROQUE POP AUTEUR ALEX IZENBERG FEASTS ON LARKS' TONGUES!

IT'S ONE AM in Los Angeles and Alex Izenberg is not quite here. "To be honest, it's a little bit past my bedtime, so I'm not 100 per cent present right now," he says over a ghostly ripple of wind chimes. "Maybe that's a good thing."

To be fair, the 31-year-old singer-songwriter's new album promises nothing else. It is called *I'm Not Here*, features an empty white mask on the sleeve, and the songs are often about things that are missing, elusive, hard to keep together, all rendered in out-of-time classic rock colours. "It has to do with not feeling like I have free will and not really getting why I'm alive," Izenberg explains. "That's what the mask is supposed to represent – not really knowing where my thoughts come from, why I do the things I do – or why anybody does the things they do."

> **"I like writing when I feel oppressed."**
> **ALEX IZENBERG**

Izenberg, who was diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia in 2012, started out as a Hendrix-obsessed guitarist, playing in bands from his teenage years before a palette-broadening introduction to Fleet Foxes galvanised him into songwriting. "I like writing when I feel really small and angry – and happy, too! – but mainly when I feel oppressed and helpless," he says. "I guess it's just a way I can do something and feel like I'm adding to the story of escaping from a machine existence, where anything I do is kind of a futile attempt to swim in the opposite direction in this really big river that's carrying me regardless."

Yet *I'm Not Here* – Izenberg's third record after 2016's *Harlequin* and 2020's *Caravan Château* – doesn't lack substance. With string and woodwind arrangements by Dirty Projectors' David Longstreth, these meticulously baroque songs have deep – yet twisted – roots in the classic songwriting Izenberg grew up with: Harry Nilsson and Randy Newman, John Lennon and Neil Young. His first album, he admits, bore a recognisable Van Dyke Parks influence; he always has a good word for the Eagles. Yet his main influences, he states, are British, especially *Dark Side Of The Moon*-era Pink Floyd and King Crimson. "Peter Sinfield, the lyricist, was a great poet and I'm really inspired by him. One of the things I love about Crimson is it paints a picture rather than grasping at your attention."

The songs on *I'm Not Here* are rich in imagery, from Gemini Underwater's florid symbolism to Egyptian Cadillac's surreal love songs ("I'm taking a paid vacation to the Kokomo/ I had a revelation and let it go"). Sea Of Wine and Our Love Remains, meanwhile, bear the influence of his dog, Larks (named in tribute to his beloved King Crimson), who died in 2020, leaving him darkly pondering time and mortality.

Absence might be at the heart of his songs, but the ornate world Izenberg creates on *I'm Not Here* is carefully controlled: "When you go out into the world too much and you're around strangers, it can be really contaminating for your mind and for the things you love," he says as the wind chimes shiver. "I'm just getting closer and closer to music as the years pass."

Victoria Segal

Alex Izenberg's I'm Not Here is out on Domino on May 20.

FACT SHEET

- For fans of: Gruff Rhys, Pink Floyd, Harry Nilsson.
- The video for *I'm Not Here*'s Egyptian Cadillac features Ray Wise, the actor who played possessed father Leland Palmer to such terrifying effect in David Lynch's Twin Peaks.
- Chris Taylor of Grizzly Bear – another inspiration – mixed Izenberg's second album *Caravan Château*.
- Ivory, with its refrain of "real love will stone you", was written as "a mood piece" about a poor young man whose lover leaves him for "a really well-off wealthy older guy." In keeping with Elliott Smith's Say Yes, it "represents that when love happens, it's not really anyone's decision."

KEY TRACKS

- Egyptian Cadillac
- Ivory
- To Move On

Baroque'n'roll star: Alex Izenberg.

MOJO PLAYLIST

Time for the month's best garage fuzz, folk-dub and rock drive.

1 SUGGS & PAUL WELLER OOH DO U FINK U ARE?
Two British pop titans soulfully reflect on the English tragedy of knowing one's place, with a soupçon of Costello's Accidents Will Happen.
Find it: *streaming services*

2 TY SEGALL HELLO, HI
After the arena-sized synth grunge of last year's *Harmonizer*, the indomitable Cali rocker relocates to the fuzz garage – once he's got the spooky a cappella action out of the way.
Find it: *Bandcamp*

UKRAINIAN NATIONAL ANTHEM

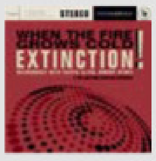
3 JAH WOBBLE & THE UKRAINIANS FEAT. JON KLEIN UKRAINIAN NATIONAL ANTHEM IN DUB
Wobble and Pete Solowka's band do a bass-heavy-in-the-echo-chamber version of the national song of Ukraine: proceeds to supporting refugees from the war.
Find it: *Bandcamp*

4 DANGER MOUSE & BLACK THOUGHT NO GOLD TEETH
The intrepid super-producer returns to hip-hop after 17 years away, with undervalued Roots frontman Black Thought for company.
Find it: *streaming services*

5 JESSIE & BERNARD SEVEN RED ROSE TATTOOS
Thesp Jessie Buckley (Chernobyl; Fargo) and Bernard Butler join hands for *Solid Air/Kind Of Blue* windswept folk-blues. From upcoming LP *For All Our Days That Tear The Heart*.
Find it: *streaming services*

6 MART AVI BIG SLEEP
Baltic avant-R&B auteur gets vaporous, like a Compass Point session at Ice Station Zebra. From new LP *Blade*.
Find it: *Bandcamp*

7 WEIRD NIGHTMARE DARKROOM
A solo project from Alex Edkins, of Canadian bruisers Metz, new 45 Darkroom assimilates Breeders, GBV and Sugar.
Find it: *streaming services*



8 VANDERWOLF FEAT. ROBERT WYATT WHEN THE FIRE GROWS COLD
Wyatt brings weary wisdom to an eerie gulag-guignol for voices and piano about the endings of things.
Find It: *YouTube*

9 THE COURETTES SO WHAT
Not an Anti-Nowhere League cover, but a B-side wall-of-sound drama from the Danish/Brazilian duo's new EP, Back In Mono.
Find it: *streaming services*

10 WILCO RESERVATIONS (LIVE AT THE PAGEANT)
A Wilco bonanza this month: not just a terrific twelfth LP (reviewed page 87), but this first leak from a massive box set of *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot*. One track down, 81 more to come!
Find it: *YouTube*

Capital Pictures

TAJ MAHAL & RY COODER

GET ON BOARD
THE SONGS OF SONNY TERRY & BROWNIE McGHEE
TAJ MAHAL & RY COODER
TAJ MAHAL, vocal, harmonica, guitar, piano; RY COODER, vocal, guitar, mandolin, banjo;
JOACHIM COODER, drums, bass.
MY BABY DONE CHANGED THE LOCK ON THE DOOR
THE MIDNIGHT SPECIAL
HOORAY HOORAY
DEEP SEA DIVER
PICK A BALE OF COTTON
DRINKIN' WINE SPO-DEE-O-DEE
WHAT A BEAUTIFUL CITY
PAWN SHOP BLUES
CORNBREAD, PEAS, BLACK MOLASSES
PACKING UP GETTING READY TO GO
I SHALL NOT BE MOVED
NONESUCH RECORDS
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GET ON BOARD

THE SONGS OF SONNY TERRY & BROWNIE McGHEE

THE ACCLAIMED NEW ALBUM OUT NOW

RECORD COLLECTOR
★★★★

UNCUT
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GUITARIST
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CLASSIC ROCK
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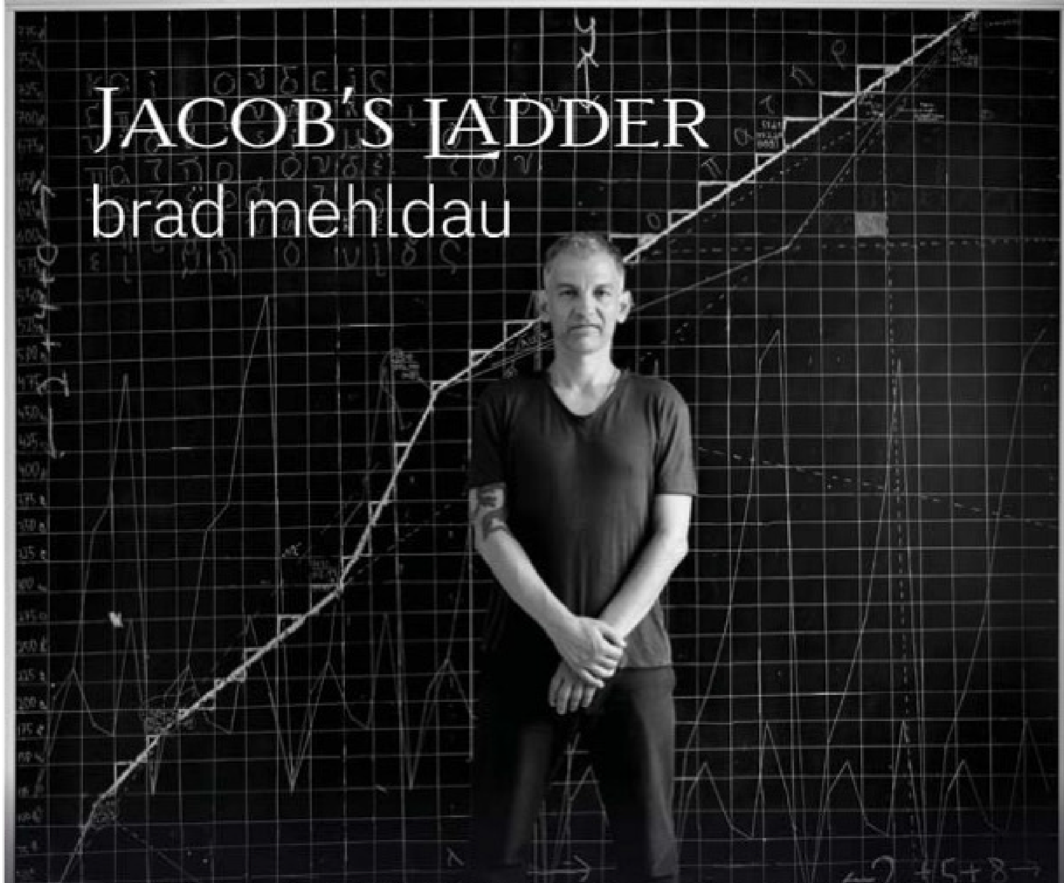
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brad mehldau

THE ACCLAIMED NEW ALBUM OUT NOW

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Mojo
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CÉCILE MCLORIN SALVANT

GHOST SONG

THE ACCLAIMED NEW ALBUM

OUT NOW

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– BBC MUSIC MAGAZINE ★★★★★

'ONE OF THE MOST DARING AND RESOURCEFUL VOCALISTS IN JAZZ – OR ANY OTHER GENRE, FOR THAT MATTER.'
– UNCUT ★★★★

MOJO
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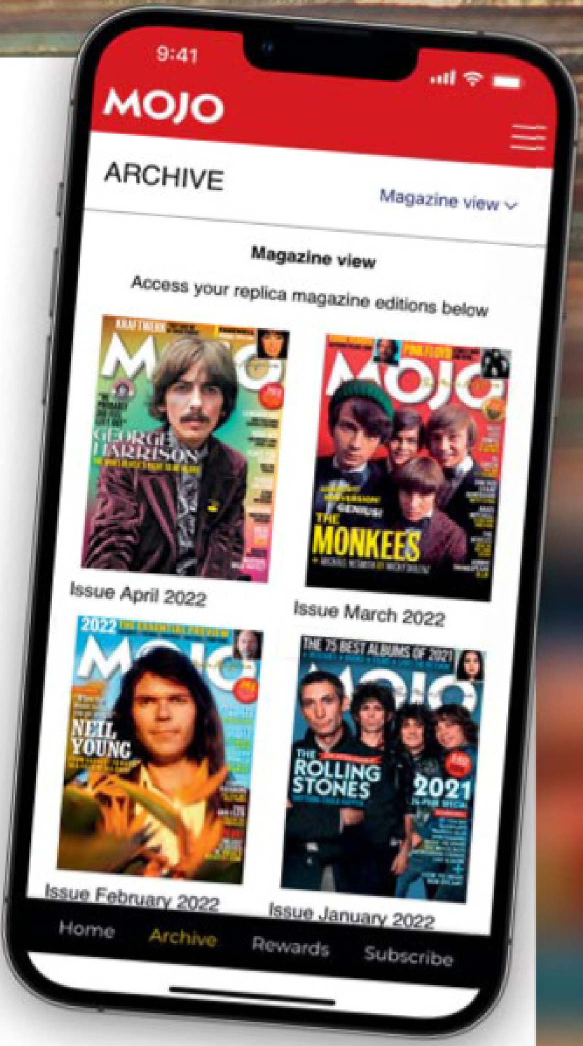
JOHN MULVEY, EDITOR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THE MOJO INTERVIEW

Think you know Robert Fripp? Then who is this mohawked imp in a tutu, who performs *pas de deux* on YouTube and says he "hated" King Crimson? And what was that about The Damned!? "I do believe I mooned them..."

Interview by **TOM DOYLE** • Portrait by **KEVIN WESTENBERG**

OPENING THE DOOR OF HIS WORCESTERshire townhouse, Robert Fripp appears in black T-shirt and joggers, perspiring visibly. "You're early," he cheerfully notes. "I'm just back from the gym, doing yoga and martial arts."

Before he goes off to get changed, he sets MOJO up at his kitchen table with a peppermint tea and – clearly the host with the most – a box of fruit-shaped marzipan treats. He returns 10 minutes later, characteristically dapper in a dark blue three-piece tweed suit and yellow tie. The look is capped by his grey mohawk, which he says he's getting tidied up by a barber tomorrow.

This kitchen is, of course, a now-familiar setting thanks to the weekly Sunday Lunch YouTube series shot here since lockdown, in which Fripp and his wife of nearly 36 years, Toyah Willcox, perform daft dress-up cover versions of anything from Metallica's Enter Sandman (nearly eight million views to date) to (topically) Edwin Starr's War. It's been quite the plot twist in the tale of this apparently earnest and "difficult" musician.

"My wife felt that I was getting a little unhealthily introspective," he offers. "So, she decided she was going to take me down to the riverside, put me in a tutu and get me dancing to Swan Lake." The bigger idea, he says, was "to give received opinion a hefty kicking. You think you know that Robert Fripp is this dead serious, progressive rock person?"

Many feel they do, given his apparently strict and often gnarly stewardship of King Crimson for more than half a century. But, in fact, Fripp tends to favour his celebrated collaborations – most famously with David Bowie on *"Heroes"* and *Scary Monsters (And Super Creeps)* – and solo endeavours over anything he's ever done with the prog band that made his name. In recent months, despite being just shy of his 76th birthday, he's been a busy bee: overseeing a 32-disc box set of his solo work between 1977-83, titled *Exposures*, and finishing a 564-page book, The Guitar Circle, featuring his writings for the international guitar tuition retreats he's been running since the '80s.

Born on May 16, 1946, in Wimborne, to a mother who worked at Bournemouth records office and a father who ran an estate agency, Fripp still speaks with a surprisingly ripe Dorset accent, 55 years after he quit the south-western English county for London.

As Willcox shouts down to tell him, "I'll be upstairs, doing some filming," he leads MOJO through to his book-lined study.

Face-to-face across his desk, over two hours, the greatest art-rock guitarist of his generation is engaging company, fond of eye contact and knowing laughter, and often responds to questions with great tangential leaps, ever the improviser. A sharp-witted conversationalist, he keeps you on your toes. As has been previously recorded, he is prone to oddly referring to himself in the third person as Robert or Fripp. Sometimes, he tends towards the metaphysical, talking about King Crimson as a spirit that passes through the musicians involved, or even as some kind of an entity in itself.

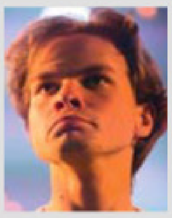
There is, however, it has to be noted, not one guitar on display anywhere MOJO can see in his house. "Because I so *hated* my professional life," he states with a grimace.

Really? All of it? "No," he smiles. "King Crimson."

➢

WE'RE NOT WORTHY

Black Midi's **Geordie Greep** kowtows.



"The first time I heard Fripp was *Larks' Tongues In Aspic* and then I got into all the early King Crimson LPs. It's such dramatic, exciting music – Stravinsky with guitars. *Exposure* is a great album. For me, Fripp never sounds like the guitar dictates his musical ideas – it's always the other way around."

Kevin Westenberg, Alamy

Going back, what was the first music that lit up your mind? You were a big fan of Scotty Moore?

Yeah. There were two records my sister and I bought for my eleventh, her twelfth birthday, in 1957. We bought Elvis Presley, Don't Be Cruel/Hound Dog, and Tommy Steele's Rock With The Caveman. The guitarist playing on Tommy Steele, I learned quite a few years later, was Bert Weedon. And it was awful. An 11-year-old just knows. Whereas, Elvis, whoa, and Scotty Moore digging in.

You became devoted to the guitar, despite being, as you've said, "tone deaf" and having a "low sense of rhythm"? But you were incredibly disciplined?

Yeah, I went to guitar, December 24, 1957. My mother bought me all my Christmas presents, but I wanted a guitar. So we went shopping, Westbourne Arcade [in Bournemouth], to Minns Music and I bought an Egmond guitar. I went to guitar lessons with Mrs Kathleen Gartell, a Salvation Army lady, wonderful woman, and her youth orchestra at Corfe Mullen. She gave me my first lessons, and I knew, this is my life.

But, for a time, it looked like you'd be going into your dad's estate agency business?

I was doing economics at Bournemouth College, 1966. And I thought, "For all my studying, I am not going to change the world doing this." It seemed to me that the life of a professional musician would actually be a proper education. Not up in the ivory tower of working out Keynesian macroeconomics, economic history and all the rest of it.

You were playing pubs and hotels in Dorset with your early rock'n'roll and jazz groups the Ravens and the Douglas Ward Trio. But hearing the tail end of A Day In The Life on Radio Luxembourg one night when you were 21 was a big moment?

Yeah. Driving home from working at the Majestic Hotel three or four nights a week [after playing] in the hotel orchestra, putting on my little stereo player, and hearing A Day In The Life. I couldn't look back. The power of music reached over and just grabbed me.

In '67, you formed Giles, Giles And Fripp. You responded to the Giles brothers' ad for a keyboardist and vocalist and got the gig even though you didn't sing or play keyboards…

Well, I never did get the gig. (*Laughs*) After rehearsing for a month, full time, going down every day to the Beacon Royal Hotel on the West Cliff in Bournemouth, I said to Mike as a joke, "Well, Mike, have I got the job?" Well, obviously I had, we were rehearsing. And he kind of sat and rolled himself an Old Holborn and said, "Let's not be in a great hurry to commit ourselves to each other." And this was a recurrent motif with Michael. He couldn't commit himself. So [later], he never agreed to the name King Crimson.

Trying to get a break on the London music scene of 1967 – was it a rough education?

Well, the first day I spent in London as a professional musician with Michael and Peter Giles, I received my first lesson: you will be fucked. We got the job as the backing group for The Flower Pot Men who'd just had the big [Let's Go To] San Francisco hit, and we moved to London. So, we drove up. They collected me at six o'clock in the morning from Wimborne. Suitcases, equipment into Peter Giles's ratty old Daimler and we set off for London. We went in to Soho Square to meet the agent, and he said, "The boys have got another backing group."

The band moved into Brondesbury Road in Maida Vale, recording many home demos for your first record. The result, *The Cheerful Insanity Of Giles, Giles And Fripp* is an incredibly eclectic album. Was it too out there or uncategorisable even for 1968?

Yeah. Playing their songs didn't excite me hugely. I thought, "Look, these are good players. And they could be playing something more challenging." So, the pieces that I contributed were challenges for players. Erudite Eyes was an improv, because what you do with really good players is you put them in a context, you give them a platform and say, "Go jump and fly." Wayne Bickerton, our producer, didn't like any of it. Wayne's continual approach was, "Um, but is it commercial?" To which, my reply was, "Fucking sure, Wayne. Fucking sure it's commercial." (*Laughs*)

It was in that same house that King Crimson were conceived. Can you zap yourself back there in your mind?

The kitchen of 93 Brondesbury Road. Not a good place for anything to be conceived. Not even making yourself dinner. Urgh. There we are in rehearsal and the aim of King Crimson was to be the best band in the world: "We're going for it. This is it. The music comes first."

During those early days of King Crimson in 1968-69, you've talked about there being among the players "telepathic situations, precognition". Can you explain further?

Would you ask the poet to explain, in prose, their poetry? You see, it's a difficult one. I can tell you the process of how, as a working player, I put myself in the space to engage with what's flying by. It doesn't explain what is flying by.

The ever-changing line-ups of the group in the late '60s and early '70s: was it exhausting?

It was awful all the way. Until 2013, when it became only difficult.

You've said it's hard for you to re-engage with King Crimson's back catalogue because "the situation was often unpleasant" and has left "scars on my psyche"? Do you accept some blame for your part in the difficulties?

A LIFE IN PICTURES

Guitar King: Fripp's fantastic trip.

1 Strummer boy: 11-year-old Robert, with his sister Patricia, playing his first guitar, an Egmond Freres.

2 By royal appointment: King Crimson (from left) Fripp, Ian McDonald, Michael Giles and Greg Lake in 1969.

3 "Flying by" on-stage at the Hyde Park Free Concert in London, September 4, 1971.

4 King Crimson's 1972-74 line-up: (from left) John Wetton, David Cross, Fripp and Bill Bruford.

5 "It was fabulous": performing Donna Summer's I Feel Love with Blondie's Debbie Harry, CBGB, 1978.

6 Suits you: King Crimson in Tokyo, December 1981, (from left) Fripp, Bill Bruford Adrian Belew and Tony Levin.

7 "Fripp A-licious!": Robert and wife Toyah Willcox cover Red Hot Chili Peppers' Can't Stop for their Sunday Lunch YouTube series, April 2022.

8 "There is juice in live work": King Crimson reunite at The Palladium, London, November 2, 2018.

9 "The music, essentially, kept me going": Robert Fripp with King Crimson's 1969 debut album *In The Court Of The Crimson King*.

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DGM Archives, Getty (4), Bobby Grossman (2), Avalon

Blame? That's an interesting one. Yes, on occasion. I would say the occasion was making [third album] *Lizard*. The last six months of 1970 were utterly appalling in a number of ways. I was strained in so many different directions, while engaging with the active hostility of both Peter Sinfield and Gordon Haskell. Even if that were all that I was dealing with, yes, I acted gracelessly on occasions.

In 1972, you first met Brian Eno. Why do you think you were creatively attracted?

Well, I can't speak for Brian. I could guess one or two things. First of all, I met Brian in the E.G. office. Bryan Ferry had auditioned for King Crimson, and I am one of two people who've heard Bryan Ferry sing [21st Century] Schizoid Man, The Court Of The Crimson King, and the other one is Peter Sinfield. There was a side of Bryan where you could tell… not quite a hustler, but he could do that.

He wasn't the singer for Crimson, but he had something, and he was going to go somewhere, and that was obvious. So, I said, You might like to call E.G. management, which he did. Eno was [Roxy Music's] off-stage mixer, and because E.G. management had seen the resentment and hostility of Peter Sinfield, our off-stage mixer behind the scenes, and Peter's desire to increasingly get on-stage, they put Eno on-stage. Thinking that would get away with a problem. Yeah, how successful was that?

On *(No Pussyfooting)* in 1973, you and Eno together created these eerie, futuristic soundscapes, through the invention of what you called Frippertronics, using two Revox reel-to-reel tape machines to build up endless loops…

Eno is a wonderfully charismatic, fun character. He said, "Would you like to come round one evening?" So, I went round to his ground floor flat near Maida Vale. I took a guitar and my pedal board. There's these two Revoxes. He didn't explain how it worked. But my background is probably closer to an improviser's mindset than it is as a repertoire player.

In '75-76, you dropped out for 10 months to live at Sherborne House in Gloucestershire where you enrolled at J.G. Bennett's International Academy for Continuous Education and studied, among others, Gurdjieff. You thought it might be a permanent step outside of music?

> "The first day I spent in London **as a professional musician,** I received my first lesson: **you will be fucked.**"

Oh, I wish, I wish.

But, summer 1977, Eno leads you to Berlin, Bowie and *"Heroes"* – autowriting in the studio, having fun. Sounds re-energising?

I moved to New York in February 1977. The phone went: "Hello, it's Brian. I'm here in Berlin with David. Hang on, I'll pass you over." Then David comes on: "Do you think you can play some hairy rock'n'roll guitar?" And I said, "I don't know because I haven't properly played for three years. But if you're prepared to take the risk…" So, the first-class ticket on Lufthansa arrived.

We landed first in Frankfurt, and there I was with my guitar and pedal board. And this was in the days of the Baader-Meinhof. Now, you imagine a German security guard undoing this box with all these wires, batteries and pedals. I flew on to Berlin, went into the studio, plugged in to Brian's VCS 3 [synth]. They hit it and the first thing I played, exactly as I played it [on the record], was Beauty And The Beast.

Then, the fact that you'd worked with Eno meant that you weren't seen as the prog enemy in the New York punk scene?

Yeah. I think there's been two sides to viewing Fripp. One is the background as an accomplished player within the prog, now hated. And here's Eno and Bowie and new wave, and from one point of view, they're incompatible. How could I find them incompatible? See, going back to when I was 21, there was nothing different between Hendrix and the Bartók string quartets, and the Rite Of Spring and A Day In The Life. It was one voice in different dialects.

Larks' Tongues [*In Aspic*, 1973] is a way of hearing it like *this*. Then, here we are with Eno saying, "Well, this is playing, what are you going to do?" So, you respond. This is the improviser's instinct. But there was a difference that in England, punk, it was a very political statement. And in New York, it wasn't. It was more boho, more arty.

So, having come from art rock, you were still in art rock, really?

Well, you plug in, and you go. But what I found was a very welcoming and accepting attitude from the young players there. Whereas in England, it would be, "Who the fuck do you think you are?", in New York, it was, "Hey man, what're you doing?" So, here you are as a young player in a turning point in your life. Which way are you going to go? Well, that way.

What are your memories of that whole New York punk and new wave scene? In '78, you played guitar with Blondie at CBGB.

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RED HOT
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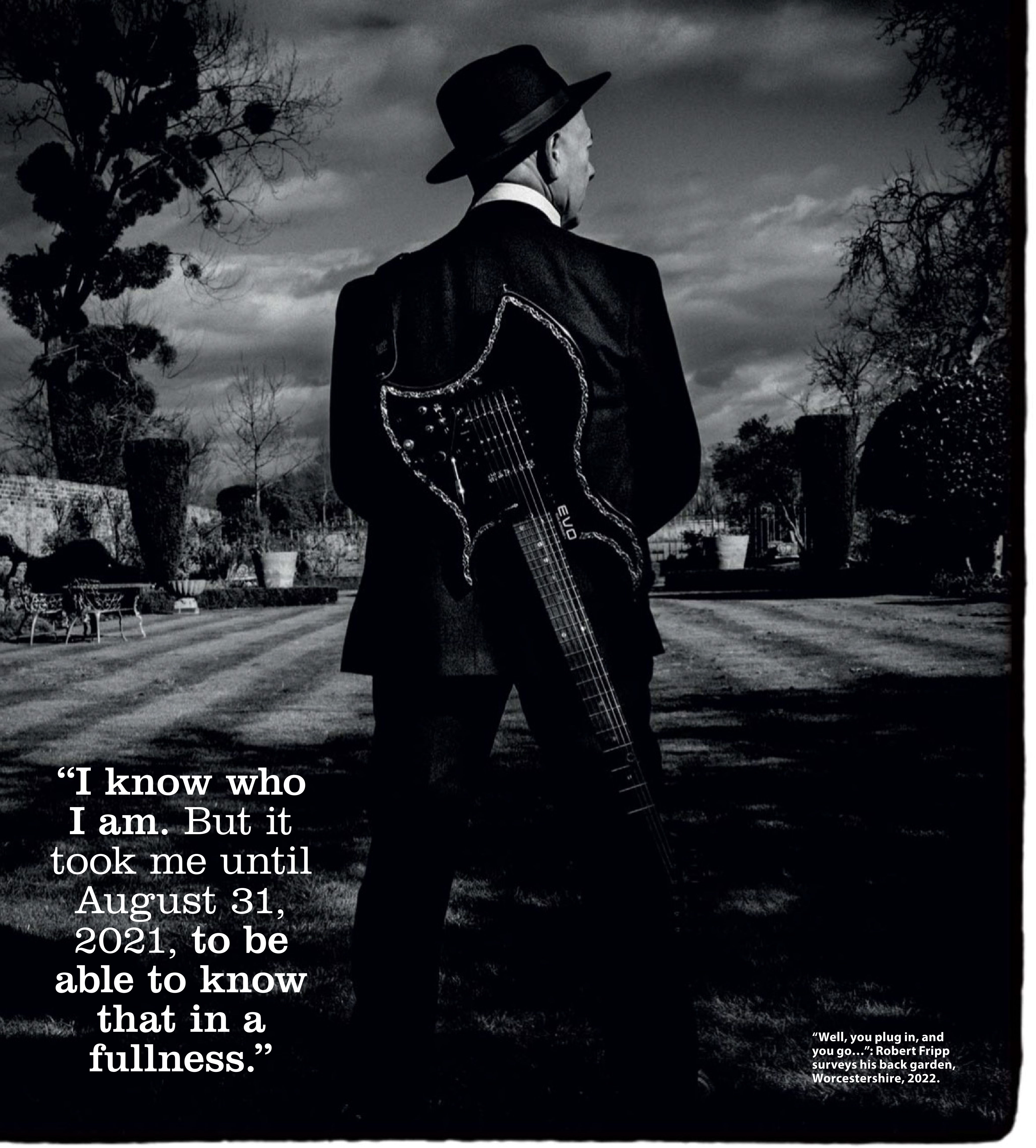


“I know who I am. But it took me until August 31, 2021, to be able to know that in a fullness.”

“Well, you plug in, and you go…”: Robert Fripp surveys his back garden, Worcestershire, 2022.

< Yeah, I got a phone call from Chris Stein: “We got this benefit at CBGBs for Johnny Blitz of the Dead Boys. He got involved in a knife fight.” I said, “Fine.” So, we met for 45 minutes, went through the pieces, then went off to CBGBs and did the set. We did [Donna Summer’s] I Feel Love and I played the sequencer parts [on guitar]. For me, it seemed the kind of playing that I could do and was familiar with. So, it was fabulous.

In 1981 you formed a new band with Adrian Belew, Bill Bruford and Tony Levin that echoed your recent work with Talking Heads and on Eno & Byrne’s *My Life In The Bush Of Ghosts*. It started off as Discipline, but soon became the latest incarnation of King Crimson…

Well, about November 1980, I was at the Bottom Line [in Greenwich Village]. I’d gone to see Steve Reich, and Bowie was over there. And there was Adrian with him. I liked Adrian’s work, clearly. I saw him with Bowie at Madison Square Garden in ’78. At the end of ’77, David asked me to go out and do that tour. But I said, “Y’know, I’ve come off the road for six years now.” Adrian was playing with Zappa. Eno said to David, “See the guitarist with Zappa…” Adrian got purloined, which pissed Frank off.

But how was it suddenly apparent to you that this band was the new King Crimson?

So, it came together with Adrian and rehearsals began at Ewhurst in Surrey. And one morning I’m in my car driving from the B&B, and I became aware of a presence in the passenger seat. Now, I’m simply explaining my experience of it. There, this one morning in early 1981, King Crimson is sitting in the passenger seat. And I am made aware that if these four musicians that are working together wish to become King Crimson, it will be King Crimson.

So, that’s when I became aware of, yes, this is King Crimson. However, I was very concerned about the level of expectation we’d have to deal with [as] King Crimson. “Oh, why aren’t you playing *In The Court…*?” Finally, while working in Paris a couple of months later on the Discipline tour, it’s apparent, “This is King Crimson. Bill, Adrian, Robert and Tony.” Tony Levin is getting in through the van door. “Tony, what do you think of being called King Crimson?” “Yeah. I never did like King Crimson.”

Meanwhile, you continued to embrace punk, becoming pals with The Damned.

Crimson were doing this TV show in Munich in '82. We did our spot and The Damned came out. I liked punk. I loved the spirit. And so I stayed to see them. I met Sensible in the toilet, we were having a piss. And he looked up and said something like, "Oh, you're a hero of mine." Then afterwards, I took some champagne back for them from our dressing room. The next day we were at the airport together and they were a little the worse for wear because they'd been out raving. Then we were driving in from Heathrow in vans, and I do believe I mooned them. And the next step was Rat Scabies's arse was out the window.

You and The Damned did a track together, Fun Factory (recorded for 1982's *Strawberries*), which wasn't released at the time because their record label Bronze went bust.

We got on well together. Then I got a call from Sensible: "We're doing this single, would you like to come down?" I say, "Yeah, great." It really began to kick off about midnight but that's past my bedtime. But it was really huge fun. And, eventually [in 1991], the record came out.

Your relationship with Adrian Belew in King Crimson, however, was increasingly troubled, though it lasted until 2009…

If you remember, in 1982, I was thrown out of the *Beat* sessions by Adrian. Then when we were supporting Tool in LA, at the Wiltern [in 2001], we walk on stage and someone shouted "Fripp!" Show dead, before a note was played. Adrian kicked in, rushed through the set, said something nasty and grumpy and stormed off.

But King Crimson still toured after that, which saved the band in many ways?

When you have tensions within the band, you go on the road. Because the power of the live event will hold you together before you walk on stage. After you walk off stage, there might be problems. But with the momentum of live music, and the audience in this real event, the band will keep moving. Do not stop and consider and ask yourselves what you're doing.

You've said that all the other records outside of King Crimson – your solo work, your collaborations – are the best places to hear your guitar playing. Why?

Because all my best guitar playing is for someone else. When I work with other people, they're encouraging me to play at my best and providing a context within which that is more likely to take place. Now, not everyone is able to do that as well as Brian Eno, David Bowie, with Tony Visconti. You see, they bring something to the party.

I have worked with people who maybe liked my work with Eno and Bowie, and I've sat there, and I look at them, and I can see them thinking, "Well, come on, play Scary Monsters." And what I didn't say is, "Well, why don't you give me what Bowie gave me? What Visconti gave me, what Eno gave me?" But you can't say that.

And how does that differ from your role in King Crimson?

Well, within the Crimson context, my aim was providing or creating a construct within which everyone in the band could realise what is highest and best in all of them. But no other member of King Crimson ever did that for me. That wasn't a problem for me because that's not why I was there. My contribution was essentially foreseeing who the players might be and putting together a situation where they could work together.

You don't tell people what to do. But you get things moving. Now going back to about '74, Bill Bruford had a quote, which was, "But Robert expected us to know what we were playing." (*Pauses, sighs*) Yeah. What's the point of me getting people together and having to tell them what to play?

Kevin Westenberg

For the last two decades you've seemed more interested in live performance than studio recording. Has the recording studio lost some of its allure for you?

There is juice in live work. There is no juice in studio work. Y'know, I hate sounding like this old man. But going into a studio in 1967, '68, '69, even going forward, '81, it was excitement. Something was going to be created. You knew it was real, there was juice. It was in the air.

Do I want to go into a studio in 2022? No. Would I be prepared to go live, with, let's say [the King Crimson tours of America and Japan] in 2021? Yes. Why? Because there was juice there. The two Covid tours of '21, there was something off the chart about them.

(*Looks something up on his laptop*) I wrote to a musician pal of mine: "There was an additional presence in the music way beyond the high frequencies." When we're on-stage I can feel King Crimson move into the players.

REGENCY PERIODS

Fripp beyond and between King Crimson, cherry-picked by **Tom Doyle**.

THE CONCEPTUAL COMBO

Fripp & Eno
(No Pussyfooting)
★★★★
(ISLAND/E.G., 1973)

Terry Riley and Pauline Oliveros may have been first, but Fripp and Eno ran with the twin tape-loop concept – re-invented as 'Frippertronics' – on these two slow-burning instrumental tracks. The Heavenly Music Corporation built its atmosphere from metallic drones and VCS 3 synth, while Swastika Girls – named after a page from a porn mag Eno found in the street – added mutant synth arpeggios to enhance its otherness.

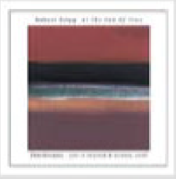
THE AXE MERCENARY

David Bowie
Scary Monsters
(And Super Creeps)
★★★★★
(RCA, 1980)

Fripp had turned in star-making performances on '77's *"Heroes"*, but it was with *Scary Monsters…* that his skronky and feral lead guitar parts truly brought art rock to the mainstream. The cut-up noise riffing of Number 5 hit Fashion was superlative, while his layers of sustain were the choppy waters on which Bowie sailed, fretting and accusing, in the brilliant Teenage Wildlife.

WIRED TO RESOUND

Robert Fripp
At The End Of Time:
Churchscapes – Live In
England & Estonia, 2006
★★★★
(DGM/PANEGYRIC, 2007)



Having down the years honed the technology of Frippertronics – originally, a tape-based looping system – in a more sophisticated digital realm, in 2006 the guitarist took his soundscapes into the naturally reverberating environments of St Paul's Cathedral in London, the Church Of The Holy Spirit in Tallinn and the Lossikirik in Haapsalu. The results sounds like a slow-moving, futuristic orchestra.

But that's counter to what you say about King Crimson having been a drag on you?

It's been a drag in terms of the interpersonal relationships having often been hard. The professional involvement with the management and record companies has frequently been dishonest and corrupt, and fraudulent even. And the actual lifestyle is profoundly antithetical to my nature. I mean, how many vans do you have to get into and bang around? However, I was a moving force in King Crimson's better hotels and better class of travelling. But up until then, it was all fucking wretched. So, what kept me going? The music essentially.

What will director Toby Amies's upcoming King Crimson documentary, In The Court Of The Crimson King, teach us about the band?

Well, what I hoped from Toby's documentary was to be told, "What is King Crimson?" The documentary, in my view, is an excellent, grown-up documentary of the life. And my personal interest was so that Toby, as an innocent in the field, would be able to tell me what King Crimson is. And it doesn't tell me that, but it does present an insight into life and death, men of a certain age. Here is one of the members [drummer Bill Rieflin, who died in 2020] with stage-four cancer. It's real. There's no music documentary horse shit in there.

What's the current status of King Crimson? You tweeted last December that the band had moved from "sound to silence", which many took as meaning it was over. Is it?

I don't know.

So there aren't any plans?

No, there's none at all.

Looking back, any regrets?

Yes, I have regrets. Yeah, like the second half of 1970 when I acted with less grace than I would insist on today. [Other than that] I really have to go searching for them. I regret that there were times when I was waiting for a person to see an aspect of what they were. What Robert would do – and here's a reason why Robert is also a terrible man to work with – I would hold up a mirror. I would not always say, "Look in the mirror," but I would hold up a mirror. And on one occasion, I hit him over the head with a mirror. And he still didn't see it. I regret that today. I would say, "Listen, this is a repetitive feature in your behaviour that you haven't seen."

This is Adrian Belew?

This is also Bill Bruford.

Your Guitar Circle tutorial retreat continues this year in America – through being an instructor, what do you learn about yourself?

(*Pauses for nine seconds*). Very quick line – who and what you are, and the relationship between the two. So, if you said, "Do I know who I am?" The answer is yes. I know who I am. And how long does it take to get to that? Just so you know, for a fact, it took me until August 31, 2021, to be able to know that in a fullness.

And what happened that day?

It was something like, (*raises voice*) Elvis is in the house! Except it wasn't Elvis. It was Robert. There in Milwaukee, at the Miller's Life whatever [Miller High Life Theatre], five minutes before King Crimson walked on stage. It was 20:45, just in the green room: "I am here, and I intend." And there, like that, [I was] utterly different. And yet exactly the same.

So… it was some kind of epiphany?

Everything fell into place. Elvis is in the building!

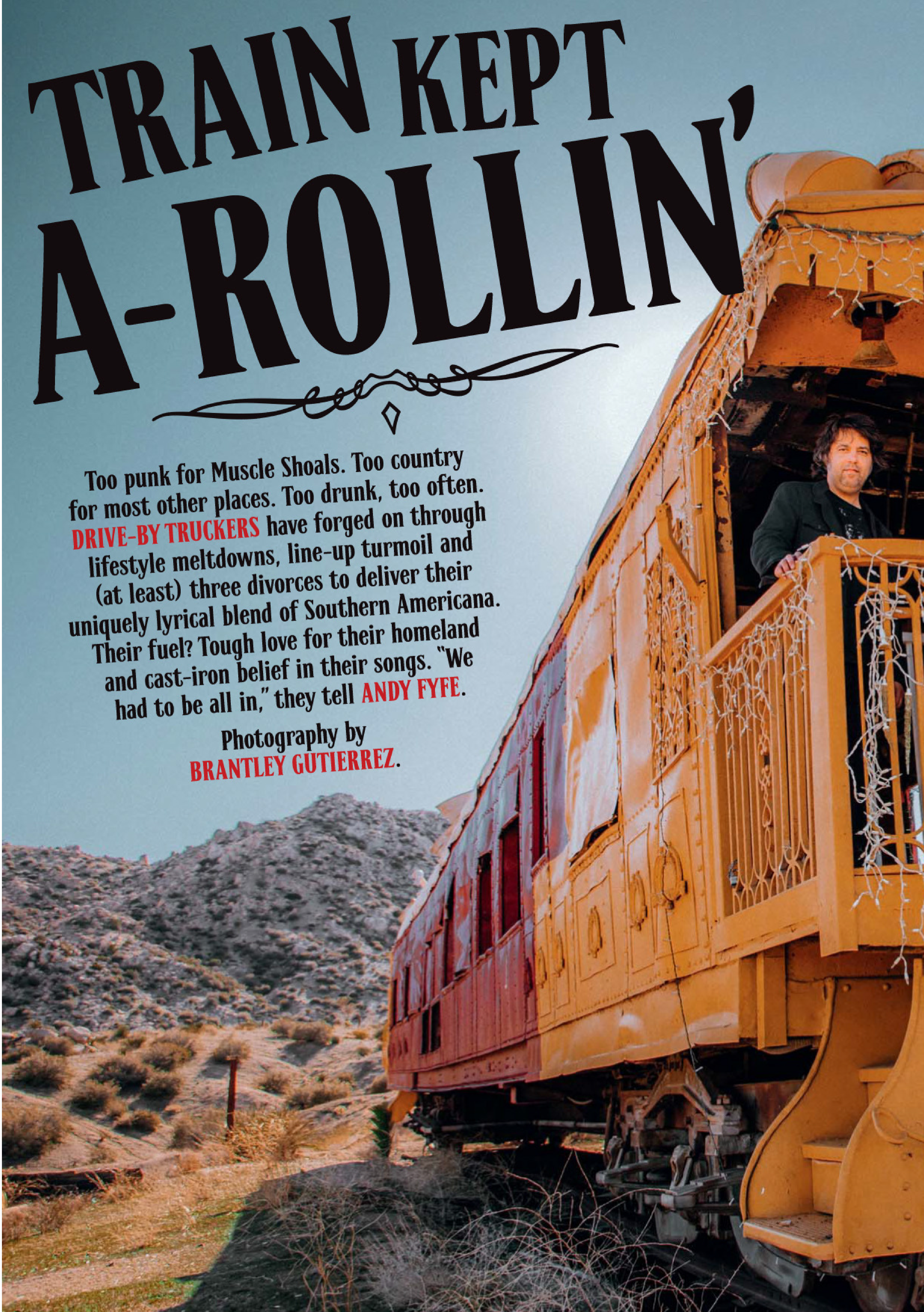
Robert Fripp's Exposures box set is out May 27 on DGM/Panegyric. Read the review on page 103.

TRAIN KEPT A-ROLLIN'

◆

Too punk for Muscle Shoals. Too country for most other places. Too drunk, too often. **DRIVE-BY TRUCKERS** have forged on through lifestyle meltdowns, line-up turmoil and (at least) three divorces to deliver their uniquely lyrical blend of Southern Americana. Their fuel? Tough love for their homeland and cast-iron belief in their songs. "We had to be all in," they tell **ANDY FYFE**.

Photography by **BRANTLEY GUTIERREZ**.



Last train home: Drive-By Truckers, Joshua Tree, California, February 2022 (from left) Jay Gonzalez, Mike Cooley, Patterson Hood, Brad Morgan, Matt Patton.

THERE COMES A MOMENT IN EVERY HARD-living, hard-touring band's career when the bus hits a wall. For Drive-By Truckers' Mike Cooley, that reckoning came in Germany just before Christmas 2010.

"I collapsed on this moving sidewalk up from the airport to a hotel," he recalls in a slow Alabama drawl. "I came to while it was still moving, went up to my room with a fuzzy head, thought I'd forgotten my room key and was walking across the lobby when I blacked out again."

In a downtown dive bar in Athens, Georgia on a sunny Sunday afternoon, DBT's co-singer, writer and guitarist stops and sips his pale ale.

"You know, when you hear someone saying, in *that* accent, 'Sir, don't get up, you're bleeding from your head. Sir, do *not get up*,' you kind of decide, I'll stay where I am."

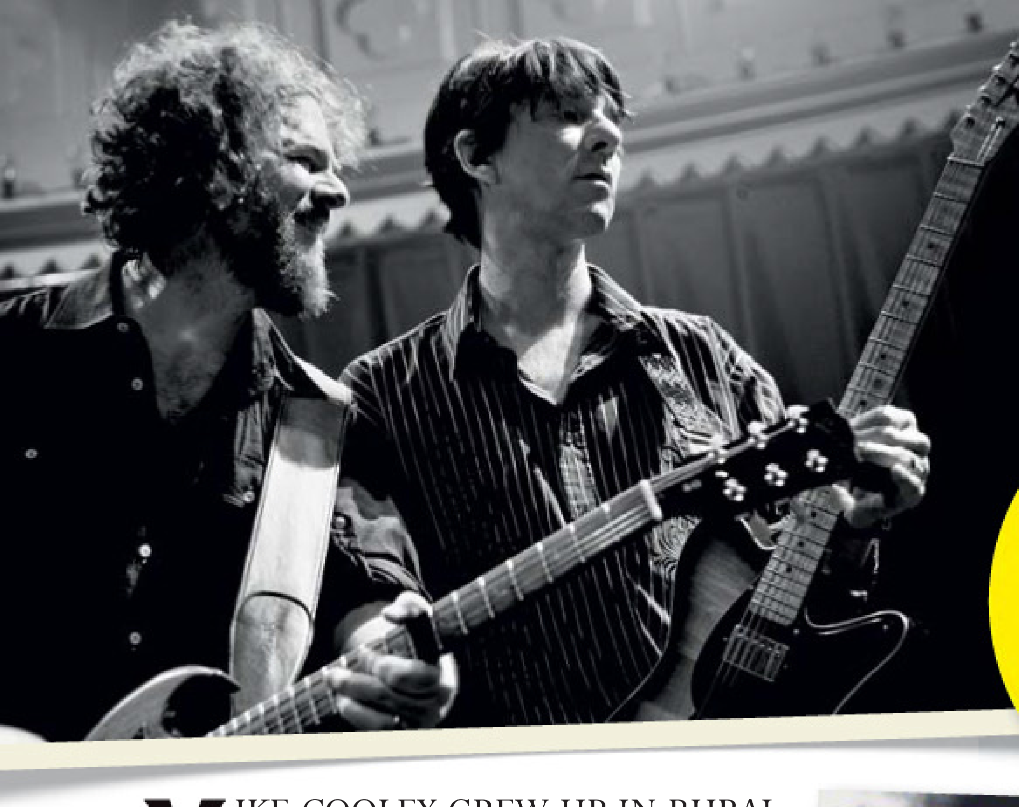
The rest of the tour was cancelled, the Truckers came home and Cooley underwent scans and tests that revealed nothing untoward. But after a decade of over 200 shows a year, in a culture of hard living that had already seen off third songwriter and guitarist Jason Isbell, it was clear something had to change.

"We were doing this in our late thirties," Cooley says. "We all had kids. The road was kind of an escape from that, but both those carousels were exhausting on their own."

After nearly 40 years of bust-ups, sackings, hard partying and grand ideas over three different bands, and a fourteenth studio album as Drive-By Truckers in the offing, Cooley and his co-driver Patterson Hood could be forgiven for delusions of indestructability. But their band is a story of how myths – of rock'n'roll, of their homeland in the South – and reality conflict, and how sometimes reality has to win.

"We're in our fifties now, and we've finally learned how to balance it all out," says Cooley, "but there were some hard lessons along the way." ➢

Brantley Gutierrez

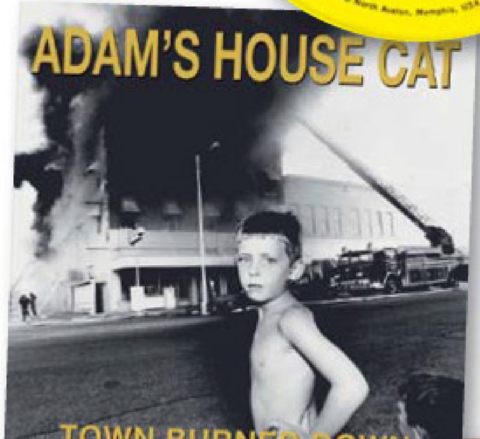


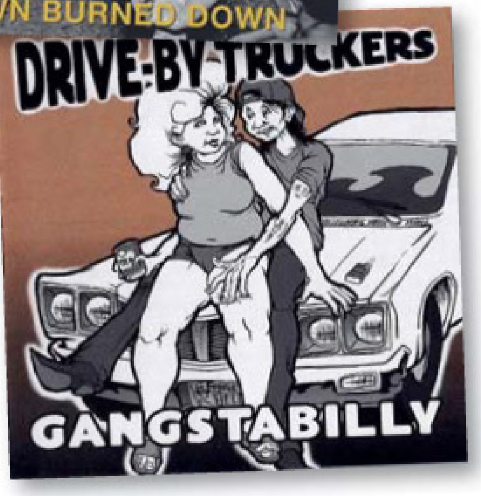
Iñigo Garayo

MIKE COOLEY GREW UP IN RURAL Alabama, on the edge of a small town that in turn was on the edge of Muscle Shoals.

"I didn't have any siblings, and I was so disconnected from anything it may as well have been a million miles from anywhere," he says. "But my childhood wasn't traumatic, nothing like that. I was lonely more than anything."

His father owned a small convenience store and won his son's first guitar through a supplier when Mike was eight. The boy duly began learning the instrument, influenced by the TV variety shows of '70s country stars Johnny Cash and Mac Davis.





Meanwhile, in Muscle Shoals itself, Patterson Hood, two years his senior, was living a far less bucolic life. His father, David Hood, was the bass player in the Muscle Shoals Rhythm Section, the fabled group of session musicians who, in the '60s, formed part of the in-house backing band at FAME Studios.

"Mom would sometimes point to the radio and say, 'Your dad's on this song,' and it would be Aretha Franklin or whoever. I'd try and hear the bass part, but I often couldn't really tell until one day she said, 'Oh, he's on this one too,' and it was The Staple Singers' I'll Take You There. There was no *not* picking out the bass on that!"

But having a dad with the one of the coolest jobs in the world wasn't something the young Hood would crow about in school. "Muscle Shoals didn't explode into the kinds of violence and shit that the South is famous for during that period," he says. "But it was still the South and it was still a perilous time. My dad basically made his living playing on records for mostly black artists, and they preferred to float under the radar about it."

Hood and Cooley met while studying at the University of North Alabama. A friend of Hood's had a room to rent "and Mike kinda came with the place". They soon decided neither of them really liked the friend and kicked him out, and sat around playing guitars because they were too broke to do much else.

"We'd sit and play and I'd pull out songs," says Hood, "and I just liked what Mike did with them. Every time I played him a song he kind of went the opposite direction. If it was a pretty song, he'd play the ugliest thing he could possibly dream up, and if it was more kind of punk he might play something really pretty."

But Hood and Cooley were young men in their twenties and there was a certain amount of butting heads.

"We'd be fighting all the time," says Hood. "We don't really do that any more, although I'm sure I still get on his nerves. He's just nicer about it now."

THEIR FIRST BAND, ADAM'S HOUSE CAT, WAS A STORY of chaos and confrontation. In a region known around the world for its apparently innate musicality, there was almost nowhere for a nascent country rock band with one eye on punk to play. The county had only recently repealed its prohibition restrictions, and what music venues there were preferred covers bands. Original music by locals was not on the Muscle Shoals public's agenda. Inspiration, however, was only across the state border in Athens, Georgia, the liberal university city that would eventually become Drive-By Truckers' home.

I'LL TAKE YOU THERE
(Alvertis Isbell)
stax
RECORDS
STA 0125
THE STAPLE SINGERS

"I worked at a record store and became a huge R.E.M. fan," says Hood. "I'd never been to Athens at that point but it seemed they voted real liberal and I thought if they can do it there, why can't we do it here? Muscle Shoals had this crazy, cool old history and we could just be a new chapter. But it wasn't at all doable at that time, or at least not by us. We were too rebellious, too pissed off, too punk rock, and the locals just did not like us at all."

Adam's House Cat were succeeded by another dead-end band, Virgil Kane. When that folded, Hood finally moved to Athens. "I spent the next two years trying to put together a band that Cooley would like enough to want to be in," he says.

Meanwhile, back in Alabama, Cooley had started writing songs of his own. It was something Hood had always hoped would happen.

"He has a way of talking," says Hood, "of expressing himself that is lyrical. I'd say to him, 'Man, you should write that in a song,' and he'd go, 'Nah, fuck you, I don't write songs, I'm a guitar player.'"

By the time Drive-By Truckers released their first album, 1998's *Gangstabilly*, both Cooley and Hood had turned 30. It was the last chance saloon – one that rarely shut. "We got a reputation for hard drinking, for sure," says Cooley. "By showtime we were always locked, loaded and loud."

At a gig in Oklahoma City they were so sloppy they cleared the room. Playing the same venue the next year, they swore to keep it together, so instead of drinking all afternoon they went to the cinema and watched Monsters Inc. "Five stinking grown men going to see this animated kids movie!" laughs Cooley. "No red flag there!"

AFTER TWO HIT-AND-MISS ALBUMS, DRIVE-BY TRUCKERS' breakthrough was 2001's sprawling *Southern Rock Opera*, a concept album as grand and possibly foolhardy as its title. For Hood, it was an idea that pre-dated even the band.

"We worked on *Southern Rock Opera* all through our first two albums," he recalls, "after me and Earl Hicks [one-time bass player and eventual producer of 1999's *Pizza Deliverance*] thought that the story of a fictional '70s Southern rock band would make a great movie. It ended up inevitably being loosely about Lynyrd Skynyrd because they're the one with all the myth. I think now it would've been so much better if we'd based it more on Molly Hatchet."

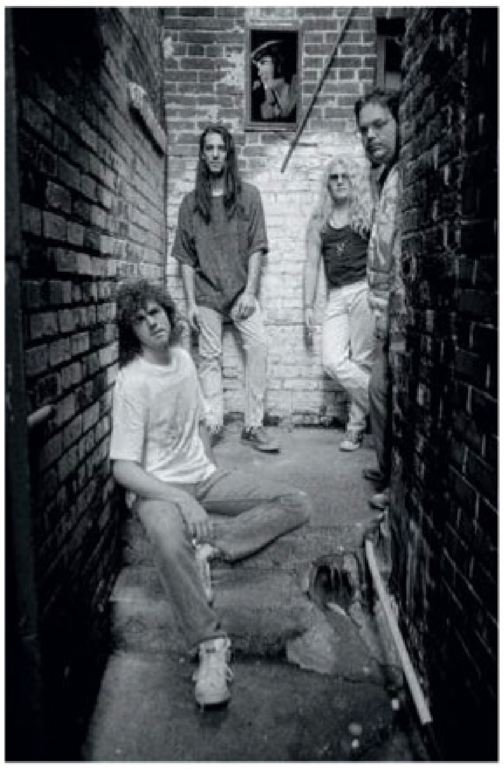
Three guitars, a bounty of riffs, week-long guitar solos and a fixation on "the duality of the southern thing" made *Southern Rock Opera* both preposterous and fascinating as Hood and Cooley struggled to reconcile their love of and fears for the place they grew up. The result was nuanced and considered and like nothing they'd recorded before.

"It was the most ridiculous thing to do," says Hood. "Nobody released double gatefold albums on vinyl in 2001, but that's what those '70s bands did, so we had to be all in. It was only after we sold 10,000 copies on our own that we finally got offered our first record deal with New West."

Southern Rock Opera established the Truckers in the vanguard of a second wave of Americana artists. The subsequent tour also introduced the world to a young Alabaman guitarist and songwriter, Jason Isbell.

Holding steady on the righteous path: Gonzalez, Morgan, Hood, Cooley and Patton, February 2022; (below, from left) Adam's House Cat in Florence, Alabama, August 1991 (from left) Hood, Cooley, Chris Quillen, Chuck Tremblay; Truckers on-stage at Richards On Richards, Vancouver, 2004, with (left) Jason Isbell; at Stagecoach Music Festival, Indio, CA, May 6, 2007 – (from left) Morgan, John Neff, Shonna Tucker, Cooley, Hood, Spooner Oldham; (opposite) Hood and Cooley at the Paradiso, Amsterdam, November 17, 2010.

> "MEMBERS CAME AND WENT. THEN THE DIVORCES STARTED HAPPENING. THERE WAS ALWAYS DRAMA." **Mike Cooley**



Brantley Gutierrez, Patrick Hood, Alamy, Getty

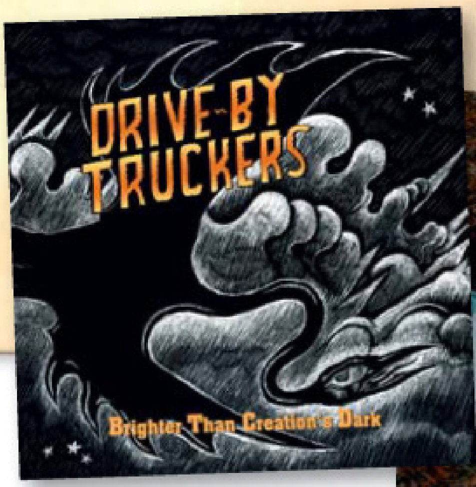
Hood had long been friends with Isbell's girlfriend – later wife, later ex-wife – Shonna Tucker, and in fact had already thought about her as a possible future bass player for the band. When third guitarist Rob Malone decided to go on holiday to New Orleans rather than show up for a filmed homecoming gig in Muscle Shoals, Hood tapped Isbell to step in at the last minute.

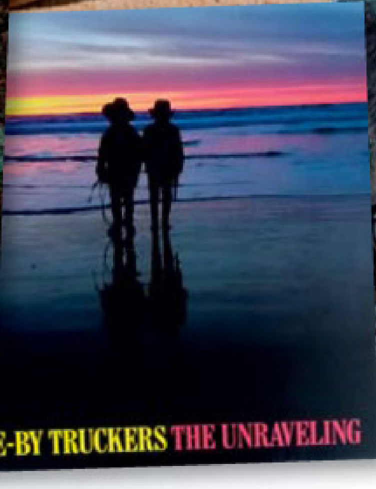
"The *Southern Rock Opera* songs needed three guitars, because they were about a band with three guitars!" Hood exclaims. "Jason happened to be in the audience for the show and he knew the record, so we asked him to get up with us, and it worked. We were off on tour the next day, so he went home, packed a bag and his guitar and jumped on the bus."

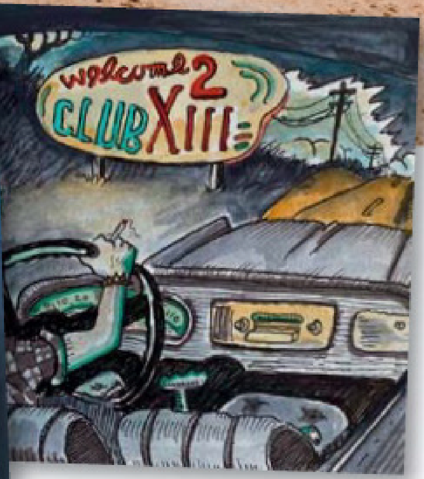
Isbell's, and eventually Tucker's, addition ushered in DBT's first purple patch, a run of three albums in six years that featured three top-flight songwriters and ever-growing success. But what began as a merry gang marauding around the world turned dark as Isbell, ➢

"MOM WOULD SOMETIMES POINT TO THE RADIO AND SAY, 'YOUR DAD'S ON THIS SONG,' AND IT WOULD BE ARETHA FRANKLIN."
Patterson Hood

Brantley Gutierrez







◄ by now married to Tucker, became mired in alcohol and drugs.

"We were a lot older than Jason when he joined. I was literally old enough to be his dad," Hood says. "He skipped all those years playing dog bars, riding in vans and went straight to touring on a bus, never got a lot of that stuff out his system in the back of a van."

As Isbell fell apart, so did his marriage and his relationship with the rest of the band.

"Some people are fun drunks," Hood says, "but that wasn't Jason. He'd be on the bus with another bottle of Jack after the show, arguing with Shonna, with us, and shouting, 'Why are you always siding with my wife?' Well, she's not the one being an asshole."

Just before Christmas 2006, Isbell was delivered an ultimatum: your behaviour is breaking up the band and it has to stop. But it didn't stop and Isbell was sacked, by Cooley.

"I knew Jason had it in him to be not only great, but also to be big if he didn't kill himself in the process," says Hood, whose instinct has proven happily correct. "I certainly didn't want to find them dead on our bus, didn't want any part of being 'that' band."

ISBELL'S DEPARTURE DID NOT SPELL THE END OF THE group's personal problems, however. Divorces were piling up (Cooley is now on his second marriage, Hood his third), the drinking wasn't exactly abating, and for an album or two after 2008's *Brighter Than Creation's Dark* the focus seemed to falter.

"Relationships started drifting around *Southern Rock Opera*, and members came and went," Cooley says. "Then the divorces started happening. We'd come home from a tour and would still be working jobs – I used to do things like decorating – but we'd struggle to get back into home life. There was always drama."

Tours followed albums followed tours followed albums, before Hood called a brief hiatus in 2012 and recorded his third solo record, *Heat Lightning Rumbles In The Distance*. It wasn't just about putting out songs that didn't fit the Truckers set-up, it was a much deeper and more ominous imperative.

"I needed an escape from the band," says Hood. "That was one of the only times I seriously thought about quitting, because it wasn't making me happy. I didn't like the way we were playing, I didn't like the way it was coming across, I was really disappointed with the whole thing. I think we'd kind of broken the Truckers and we needed to put it back together."

Repairs began with a new line-up that hasn't changed since: keyboardist/guitarist Jay Gonzalez and bassist Matt Patton alongside longtime drummer Brad Morgan. The revamped Truckers came back with the poppier *English Oceans* (2014), their highest charting album to date. "I don't know if it's one of our best records," Hood says, "but it was definitely the first record of *this* band."

It was touring *English Oceans* that convinced Hood and Cooley of the line-up's potential, and on 2016's *American Band* the pair matched it with songs that looked beyond the South's horizons. Hood and his family had moved from Athens to Portland, Oregon ("I recommend never driving across country with your family to move house"). Cooley, too, was addressing the US more broadly.

"Most of my writing for that record was after seeing the nasty, nasty backlash of America voting in its first black president," Cooley says. "You have this moment of real social progress where there are finally enough people in the country that are OK with a black president, but my God, the people who aren't OK with it are so much worse than I imagined… people who don't think Hitler was a bad guy. The times we're living in aren't as modern as we thought."

For Hood, the album proved distressingly prescient. Written and recorded as the 2016 US primaries unfolded, its themes of human and national flaws became even more relevant after Trump's election victory.

"We didn't think it was a record that had any longevity," says Hood. "But all of a sudden we had a record that was way more timely the next year, and then the *next* year, than when we actually made it. We toured for three and a half years behind that record, and it never went out of date."

Open all hours: (left, above) Drive-By Truckers on-stage at The Fillmore, San Francisco, November 22, 2014; (below) lighting up at the 40 Watt Club, Athens, GA, April 9, 2022; (opposite page) Truckers Gonzalez, Morgan, Cooley, Hood and Patton welcome you to the club, February 2022.

Mike White

DRIVE-BY TRUCKERS' NEW ALBUM, *WELCOME 2 CLUB XIII*, puts much of that behind them. Post-Covid, the band again mirror the culture around them – this time a world taking stock of a different kind of trauma. Meanwhile, they allow in a personal nostalgia that has seldom coloured their work in the past.

Club XIII itself is a real place, where Adam's House Cat got gigs opening for hair metal bands. As they almost wistfully sing, "Our glory days kinda suck". Among the album's attempts to make sense of the past is Every Single Storied Flameout, Mike Cooley's internal wrestle with his own right to guide his son through wayward teenage years after his own decades making bad decisions. As a key line has it: "If I'd been my own example I'd be worse."

When he heard the demo, Hood was knocked out, but doubted Cooley would rehearse it. "It was way too revealing," says Hood. "I didn't think he'd ever let us expose him like that."

For Cooley, however, the question never arose. As his son turned 16 and experienced a teenage wobble, the guitarist looked back at his own youth and its many mistakes and misadventures.

"Even as I was trying to write it I was looking out the window at him in the driveway thinking, 'Oh god, what are you up to now?'" Cooley recalls. "But I've made so many mistakes, done so many things that could've gone so bad, why should he listen to any advice I had, or take notice of any rules I laid down?"

To Cooley it's a slice of honest introspection, gleaned from a period of enforced retirement from the road during lockdown. For Hood, it's much much more.

"It's a genuinely profound song, to my mind. And the three-part horns! Oh my god, Cooley even had the horn arrangement in his head before we started recording."

PROFOUND OR NOT, DRIVE-BY TRUCKERS' NEW songs fit seamlessly into a live set that always stretches back to their first album. Although Hood now lives in Portland and Cooley in Birmingham, AL, every year they play homecoming shows in Athens, at the 40 Watt Club. It's where Hood ran the sound-desk while cooking up the band he hoped Cooley would like enough to join, and is still owned by a friend. Over four nights in early April, they play to packed houses of locals and others who make the pilgrimage, including – this year, at least – MOJO.

The show is a fundraiser for a local charity that the band have supported for decades: a music-based mental health resource called Nuçi's Space. This year the gigs and a fan auction of Truckers memorabilia raised $60,000, a record for the charity that Hood's wife Rebecca chaired before their move to the Pacific North-west.

As always, the Truckers play without the safety net of a setlist, the songs called by Cooley or Hood as the last one is finishing via a set of hand signals based on song titles or key lyrics.

"I think Cooley did a first on Friday night," Hood laughs over oysters and lobster rolls at an Athens seafood restaurant. "He made the signal for one song, but meant another. It was the first time ever that it's all crashed to a halt."

After nearly 40 years living on their nerves, and in each others' pockets, Hood and Cooley seem ludicrously happy together. For his part, Hood is besotted with his colleague's talent.

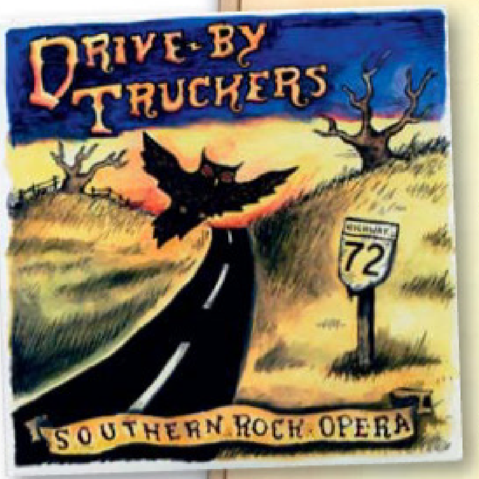
"I seriously can not wait until I hear Cooley's next song. I think the first song of his we recorded was like the third one he ever wrote. By then I'd written maybe 1,000, and he still only writes five or six a year, yet I still wonder whether any of mine are as good."

While Cooley has often thought of recording a solo album, he can't see why he'd want to play with anyone else but Hood.

"Patterson and me are brothers," he says. "We've been brothers since we were babies but just didn't meet 'til we were older. We were even largely raised by our respective maternal grandmothers – how weird a coincidence is that? I write songs, sure, but they're Truckers songs. They all fit inside the band and the band gives me what I need. Why would I want to fuck with that?" Ⓜ

DECONSTRUCTION OF THE FABLES

The pick of DBTs' albums so far, by ANDY FYFE.



SOUTHERN ROCKOPERA

★★★★

(Soul Dump/ New West, 2001)

Epic double album, and a concept within a concept. Partly the story of a fictional '70s rock band *à la* Lynyrd Skynyrd, it also explores the relationship the South has with itself, how it both embraces and rejects its political and racial stereotypes.

THE DIRTY SOUTH

★★★★★

(New West, 2004)

Jason Isbell's second DBT album, and a companion piece to the previous year's *Decoration Day*. Dark stories from the margins of Southern life, where respectable people can find themselves trapped in desperate criminality – or worse – within a heartbeat.

ENGLISH OCEANS

★★★★

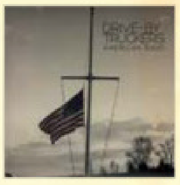
(ATO, 2014)

The current line-up's debut and first to split songs almost 50/50 between Hood and Cooley. Far more upbeat than previous albums, Hood calls it his partner's "songwriting coming of age". Wes Freed's artwork is also one of the band's most enduring merch images.

AMERICAN BAND

★★★★

(ATO, 2016)



The bewilderment that once focused on the South's paradoxes is turned on a wider America, just as Trump turns chaotic division and selfishness into political ideology. Hood is furious that none of the calculated racism and reactionary politics have yet gone away.

THE NEW OK

★★★★

(ATO, 2020)

Released on the cusp of lockdown, partly written in the wake of George Floyd's murder by police and Portland's occupation by federal forces, Hood calls it their "lost album". The politics still rage, but this is a more personal reckoning with the 'new normal'.

Getty

Hand on heart: Stevie Wonder, Griffith Park, LA, September 15, 1972.

WARNING! ADULT MATERIAL

CONTRACTUALLY AND SPIRITUALLY FREE FROM THE MOTOWN MACHINE, HOLED UP WITH TWO SWITCHED-ON BOFFINS AND THEIR MEGA-SYNTHESIZER, STEVIE WONDER TURNED 21 WITH AN EXPLOSIVE BOUNTY OF SONGS AND TWO INCREDIBLE ALBUMS IN A SEISMIC 1972: *MUSIC OF MY MIND* AND *TALKING BOOK*. "IT WAS LIKE KRAKATOA!" HEARS **BILL DEMAIN**.

PORTRAIT: **JEFFREY MAYER**

Jeffrey Mayer/Rock Negatives/MediaPunch, Alamy

"HEY, LANI! JIM! WAKE UP, I NEED you to sing a part!"

It's three o'clock in the morning, and an excited Stevie Wonder is standing over the couch in the control room of Electric Lady studio in New York, trying to rouse his two sleeping backup singers, Lani Groves and Jim Gilstrap. Wonder has been working non-stop through the night, layering tracks of Fender Rhodes, drums and lead vocals on a new tune, a jazzy pledge called You Are The Sunshine Of My Life. In its first draft, the song began with Wonder singing, "I feel like this is the beginning…" But that didn't sit right somehow. Recalling an old Motown songwriting rule – 'When in doubt, start with the title' – Wonder added a four-line prologue, then in a flash of inspiration decided to give it to real-life lovers Groves and Gilstrap.

"It may have been because we were a couple," recalls Groves, with a laugh. "Then again, we were the only singers there at that hour. I just know that I was out of it and probably sounded like a frog. 'You are the apple of my eye…' It was kind of deep for my range, but it worked, because I just woke up!"

The dozing duo's voices would lead off Wonder's *Talking Book*, his second album in a year of musical *coups*. The song, a Billboard Number 1 and Grammy winner, would become a standard covered by Frank Sinatra, Liza Minnelli and lounge singers everywhere. But it was only one of over 150 songs Wonder wrote during a fertile 18-month period from the spring of 1971 to the fall of 1972.

"Back then, Stevie would write a song a minute," says Groves, who went on to sing with David Bowie, Steely Dan and more. "I've never heard musical creativity like that in my life, from anybody."

"BACK THEN" STARTED ON MAY 30, 1971, WHEN Wonder knocked on the imposing double doors of Mediasound in Manhattan. With his bassist friend Ronnie Blanco, he had walked the block to the studio from the Holiday Inn where he was staying. He was in good spirits. He'd just turned 21, meaning he was finally free from the Motown contract he'd signed aged 11. Motown boss Berry Gordy threw him a birthday party at his Detroit manor two weeks earlier, waxing on about family loyalty, hoping to smooth the way to renegotiations. The morning after, Wonder's lawyer served papers to Gordy, disaffirming all agreements between artist and label.

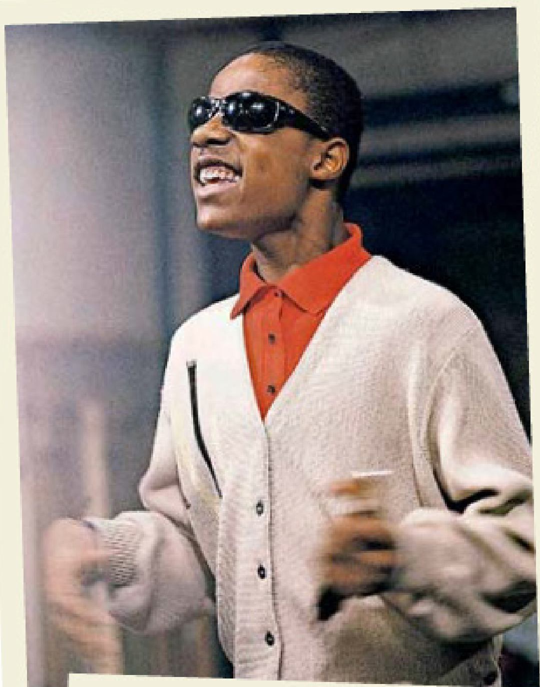
Putting a new contract on hold, Wonder had come to New York to check out the scene and meet with other labels. But his first order of business was to track down Malcolm Cecil and Bob Margouleff, the team behind his favourite album of the moment, the trippy, all-synthesized *Zero Time*.

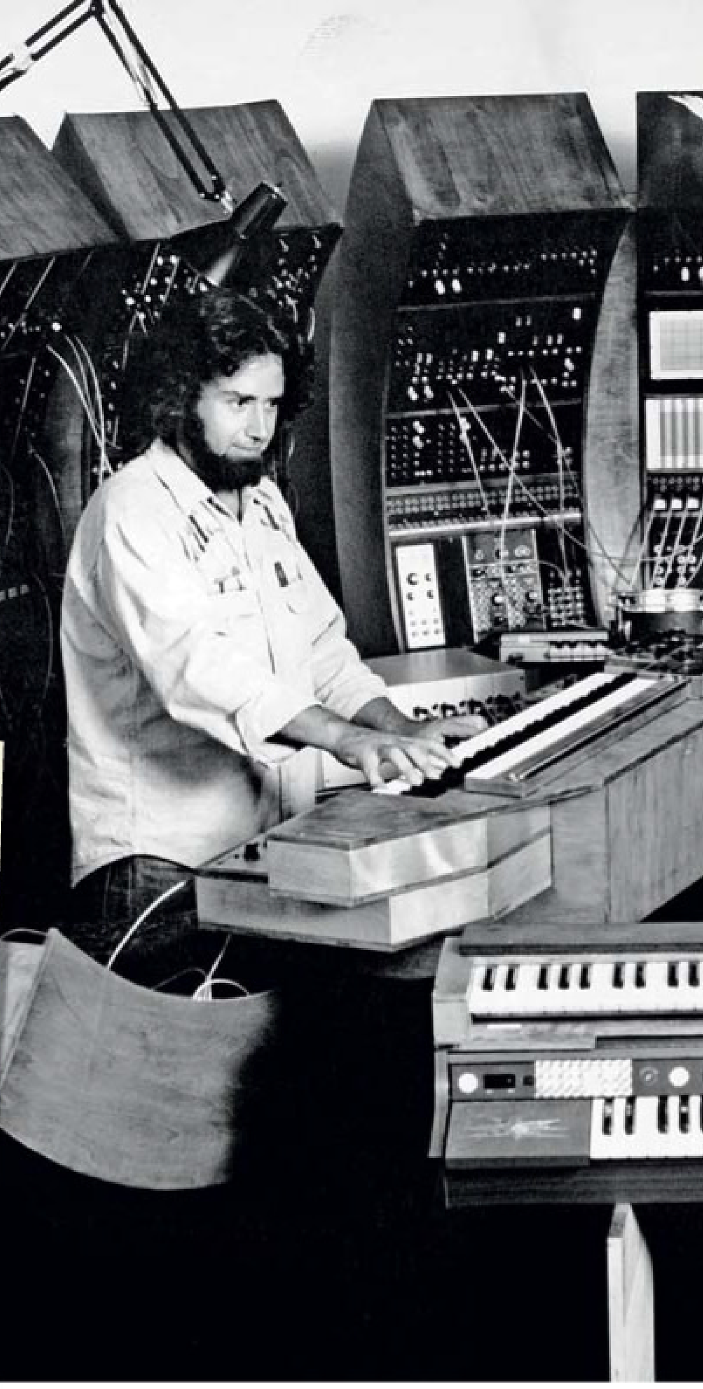
British-born Cecil was a jazz bassist-turned-resident electronics wiz at Mediasound. He'd moved to New York in the late '60s and met producer Margouleff, who was already tinkering with one of the first Moogs. The pair, one wire-skinny, the other burly, with ➢

< comically big hair, looked like Robert Crumb characters come to life. Appropriately, they called themselves Tonto's Expanding Head Band. TONTO was an acronym for the instrument they invented – The Original New Timbral Orchestra. Inhabiting its own room at Mediasound, it was a 25ft wood-panelled behemoth of blinking lights, silver knobs and spaghetti-twined cables – the world's largest modular synthesizer. It was so imposing that director Brian De Palma would use it as a prop in his rock-themed cult movie Phantom Of The Paradise.

So there was Wonder, wearing a pistachio-coloured suit, with the *Zero Time* LP tucked under his arm, unaware that his life was about to change. Cecil came to the studio door. Mutual friend Blanco made the introduction. "All the sounds on this record were made from *one* synthesizer?" Wonder asked. "Can you show me?" Cecil led him into the TONTO room and put his hands on the keyboard.

Within 10 minutes, Wonder noodled his way into a new song idea and the tape machine was rolling. It was the beginning of his coming of age on two of the best records he ever made, *Music Of My Mind* and *Talking Book*. Sensing the heaviness of the moment, Cecil called Margouleff at home, and said, "Get your ass over here!"





Going with the flow: (clockwise from left) getting hitched to Syreeta Wright, Detroit, December 9, 1970; 13-year-old Little Stevie on Ready Steady Go!, London, December 1963; chairmen of the 'boards – Robert Margouleff (left) and Malcolm Cecil get expansive on TONTO, 1974; Ray Parker Jr in 1970: "Stevie is a frustrated guitar player," he says now; blowin' away in the studio, July 22, 1972; sax man David Sanborn lights up, New York, 1967; big influence *Zero Time* and '72's *Music Of My Mind* and *Talking Book*.

FOR THE NEXT 18 MONTHS, THE tape kept rolling. While Wonder channelled his infinite muses, Cecil and Margouleff dashed around, tweaking TONTO's filters and waveforms, feathering in burbles and bleeps around their new partner's Clavinet and voice. Early on, they moved operations into Electric Lady studio, which had state-of-the-art gear, including a 16-track. Wonder loved that it was built by Jimi Hendrix (in 1967, he met Jimi briefly, backing him on drums on BBC's Top Gear). Like the late guitarist, Wonder was a studio-holic with a gift for cosmic songcraft. Away from strict-time sessions at Motown, the team worked 7pm-7am, ordering in from their favourite restaurant, Mr Waffles, then experimenting all night, chasing songs.

"AT ANY GIVEN MOMENT, STEVIE WOULD WAVE HIS HANDS AND MAKE A FUSS, SAYING, 'I GOT A NEW SONG!'"
RICK ROWE

"At any given moment, Stevie would wave his hands and make a fuss, saying, 'I got a new song!'" recalls Rick Rowe, who engineered *Music Of My Mind*. "Meanwhile, we would be setting up the headphones for him to do another song. We'd have to scramble to swap out a new reel of tape, then he'd be off and running. There was a *lot* of bookkeeping because Stevie was so creative. By the end of our first week, we had 17 songs done."

The anything-goes ethic would never have flown at Motown. From the day in 1961 that Stevland Judkins arrived at 2648 West Grand Boulevard, Detroit, and wowed Berry Gordy into signing him, he had been guided along the assembly line by musical chaperones. Their job was not to expand his artistry as much as repeat what Wonder called "the winning formula" – short punchy tunes with jaunty harmonica solos. That meant increasingly uninspired knock-offs of Uptight and Hi-Heel Sneakers.

By the mid-'60s, not-so-Little Stevie was bristling against his image as the wind-up joy boy, not to mention the label tossing him into movie tripe like 1964's Muscle Beach Party. When, against Gordy's wishes, Wonder cut a hit version of Dylan's Blowin' In The Wind, he glimpsed a more meaningful path. Channelling his love of The Beatles and Sly & The Family Stone, his last record under his 10-year contract in 1971 had an emerging funkiness and the pointed title *Where I'm Coming From*. But it was labelmate Marvin Gaye's socially conscious blockbuster *What's Going On* that really opened a vista for Wonder.

"Making records for Motown was like being part of the old studio system in Hollywood," says sax player David Sanborn, a member of Stevie's Wonderlove band from 1972 to '73. "This was more like the young maverick directors, Scorsese, Coppola, taking over. Malcolm and Bob were able to help Stevie realise his vision of what he was hearing. Literally, music of his mind."

Among the first songs cut with Cecil and Margouleff, Superwoman was the centrepiece of this newly mature style. The sumptuous ribbons of melody that wind through this two-act play about a marriage gone sour forge an odd alliance with the lyric's staid viewpoint. Wonder might've been supportive of Women's Lib marching through the streets of 1971, but he didn't like it under his own roof. He and Syreeta Wright started as co-writers. Their first song, a hit for The Spinners, had a portentous chorus: "It's a shame, the way

Getty (6)

TONTO'S EXPANDING HEAD BAND
ZERO TIME
Stevie Wonder
MUSIC OF MY MIND
STEVIE WONDER
TALKING BOOK

you mess around with my love." So he knew she was ambitious, and Superwoman's elastic Fender Rhodes groove, with its dips and ducks, feels like a promise that he'll be there for his bride should she fall. Then TONTO swells in, with a kaleidoscopic intermission, as the song reassembles into a sky-reaching torch ballad that brushes blame with a touch of self-pity. It's a magnificent use of eight minutes, and telling that Wonder talked of the long-form suite in terms of "flow".

"Stevie used that word a lot," says Rowe. "He said, 'The flow of this song is such that I don't want any edits.' That meant we had to mix Superwoman all hands on deck. Malcolm was pacing. Margouleff was reaching over the console, adjusting tones, Joan [DeCola] and I were moving faders, and especially panning. On *Music Of My Mind*, there's a *lot* of panning back and forth across the spectrum – like inner thoughts bouncing around."

It was an epic performance from the whole team. "We started mixing after dinner and finished at six in the morning," says Rowe. "We'd be seven-and-a-half minutes through, and one of us would miss a pan. And Stevie would yell, 'No, that's not the flow!'"

WITH THE FIRST BATCH OF songs on tape, they brought in Bernard Purdie to overdub. After listening, the master jazz and R&B drummer said it was impossible because the tempo varied so much across each song. So that's how Wonder landed on the drum stool, adding the slight accelerations and drags that make *MOMM*'s songs groove so hard, and going places more established drummers couldn't or wouldn't – as on Girl Blue, where Wonder clatters eccentrically beneath the song's exotic, almost Middle Eastern melody. It's like a swarm of insects have formed a percussion ensemble.

And it wasn't just drums. The one-man band had been part of Wonder's MO from the start – they dubbed him the "12-year-old Genius" – but Motown offered opportunities to add new strings to his bow, even if his eagerness to learn meant he sometimes got under his labelmates' feet (Jimmy Ruffin described him lovingly as "a pain in the ass"). From Funk Brothers drummer Benny Benjamin, Wonder absorbed indolent swing. From James Jamerson, exquisitely busy basslines. From Marvin Gaye, grit and bravery. From Smokey Robinson and Diana Ross, smoothness and sensuality. *Music Of My Mind*'s I Love Every Little Thing About You is the sound of the sponge being wrung out, while adding the unique wraparound joy vibe that would define Stevie Wonder in the '70s. "Nowadays, as musicians, we can say, 'It's like a Stevie Wonder thing,' and know exactly what is meant," notes David Sanborn. "'Stevie Wonder' has become a brand almost like Kleenex."

Fifty years on, it still boggles just how un-Motown *MOMM* is. Every song pushes the boundaries, in song length (half are over five minutes, breaking an unwritten Hitsville law), content (Evil's spiritual meditation; the refracted McCartneyisms of Happier Than The Morning Sun) and especially soundscape (TONTO's vaporous hues; the cyborg chorale on Love Having You Around, courtesy of a Talkbox-like synth extension called The Bag). When most musicians were still treating synths like surrogate instruments, Herbie Hancock praised Wonder's "orchestral use" saying, "He lets them be what they are – something that's not acoustic."

In a 1972 interview with NME, Wonder spoke of the need for "abrupt change" in his sound. "I always felt that I've been confined within a set style. This is what I want to do from now on. And all the other stuff belongs to the past."

Motown wasn't ready for the future. Upon delivery, ➢

◄ president Ewart Abner groused, "I don't hear a single." When Wonder and Cecil both suggested Superwoman, Abner said, "That's not a single, that's shit." Thus, upon its release on March 3, 1972, the album was orphaned by the label, who were doubtless banking on Wonder returning to his former, less complicated self.

That spring, in the world outside the studio, the Mariner 9 headed for Mars, Vietnam peace talks stalled and The Godfather opened. On a related note, Wonder's new lawyer Johanan Vigoda paid a visit to Berry Gordy to make an offer he hopefully wouldn't refuse.

Harvard-educated, with a "dese and dose" Bronx accent, Vigoda wore rumpled clothes and munched on sunflower seeds. But behind the Columbo-like front was a bulldog. Even up against a savvy brawler like Gordy, he landed Wonder an unprecedented deal – a $900,000 advance, his own publishing company and a 14 per cent royalty rate, known in the biz as the "superstar rate".

With a summer tour opening for The Rolling Stones and a new album, *Talking Book*, taking shape, Stevie Wonder was about to make that jump.

IF THE HANDMADE, intimate-sounding *Music Of My Mind* was the discovery phase of Wonder's new-found freedom, *Talking Book* was the unveiling of a full-blown lexicon of swagger and soul. Its selection of songs – conceived as "pages" in Wonder's emotional biography – mixed Motown pop smarts with grown-up lyrics, many of them processing Wonder's divorce from Syreeta, inside a matrix of electro-funk astral projection.

Wonder was now totally interfaced with TONTO, from the celestial sweeps and dissonant daubs on ballads You And I and Blame It On The Sun, through the lurching, bullish basslines on Maybe Your Baby, to the squiggly counterpoints that met the dense, Duke Ellington-style block harmony of You've Got It Bad Girl. It's hard to trace where 'real' instruments end and 'synthetic' ones begin.

There was a willingness, too, to seize happy accidents in the studio, as on the game of tag between Wonder's voice and Sanborn's sax laced through Tuesday Heartbreak. After an all-night party hosted by Mick Jagger, a groggy Sanborn was called into the studio the next morning (half of *Talking Book* was cut at Crystal Sound in LA). "Stevie played the track and I'm just getting my bearings," Sanborn recalls. "I came back into the booth, and Stevie said, 'That's it!' I said, 'What are you talking about?' He said, 'What you played was great!' I said, 'You're kidding. I was just warming up.' So I packed up my horn and left. The whole thing took less than an hour. I'm like, 'What the fuck just happened?'"

Another spark of spontaneity turned into Wonder's first US Number 1 single since 1963's Fingertips, and his signature song. In 1971, he had agreed to write Jeff Beck a tune in exchange for the guitarist's services in the studio. That was Maybe Your Baby. But by the time Beck arrived at Electric Lady, Wonder had decided to keep it for himself. Instead, the story goes, he offered a consolation prize of Superstition. But was it already written? Beck claims that he was messing around on drums in the studio one night, when Wonder came in, shouting, "Don't stop!", jumping on the Clavinet. "Then the lick came out," Beck recalled. "That was my song, in return for playing on *Talking Book*. I thought, 'He's given me the riff of the century.'"

Beck recorded it with Cecil and Margouleff producing. Wonder did too, agreeing that Beck's version would be released first. But when Motown heard the song, they flipped, insisting on a rush release. Beck was angry. Equally inflamed was Beck's CBS label boss Clive Davis, who chewed out Cecil "for failing as a producer", making him pay for the $40,000 session. Beck's version came out a year later on *Beck, Bogert & Appice*. Wonder knew he'd screwed over his

SOUL SURVIVORS

WONDER'S TOUR WITH THE ROLLING STONES IN 1972 WAS "LIKE BEING IN THE SPIN CYCLE OF A DRYER" – BUT IT PAID OFF, HEARS BILL DEMAIN.

"ANYBODY WHO opens for The Rolling Stones has got a mountain to climb," says David Sanborn.

"Some nights when Stevie came on stage, it was like, 'Boo! Get off! We want the Stones!'" says Lani Groves. "But as soon as he did Superstition, everything just turned around."

Sanborn and Groves were part of Wonder's nine-piece Wonderlove, travelling with the Stones Touring Party (STP) in summer 1972. It was lawyer Johanan Vigoda who pulled the strings to get Wonder the slot (the Stones were considering Bob Marley). "Exposure was the idea," said Wonder, who accepted a measly $1,000 per night. That meant after band fees and travel, he was losing money. There have also been accounts of sabotage from the Stones camp: Wonder had a strict 15-minute time limit, spotlights were saved for the headliner and his sound man was forbidden to push the volume over a certain level.

"Any headline act is going to have different lights and production touches to show them off," reasons Wonderlove guitarist Ray Parker Jr. "Stevie and the Stones got along really well. There was a lot of respect there."

Sanborn adds, "Sure, we played a shorter set than them, but we got invited on stage at the end of their show to play Uptight and Satisfaction together."

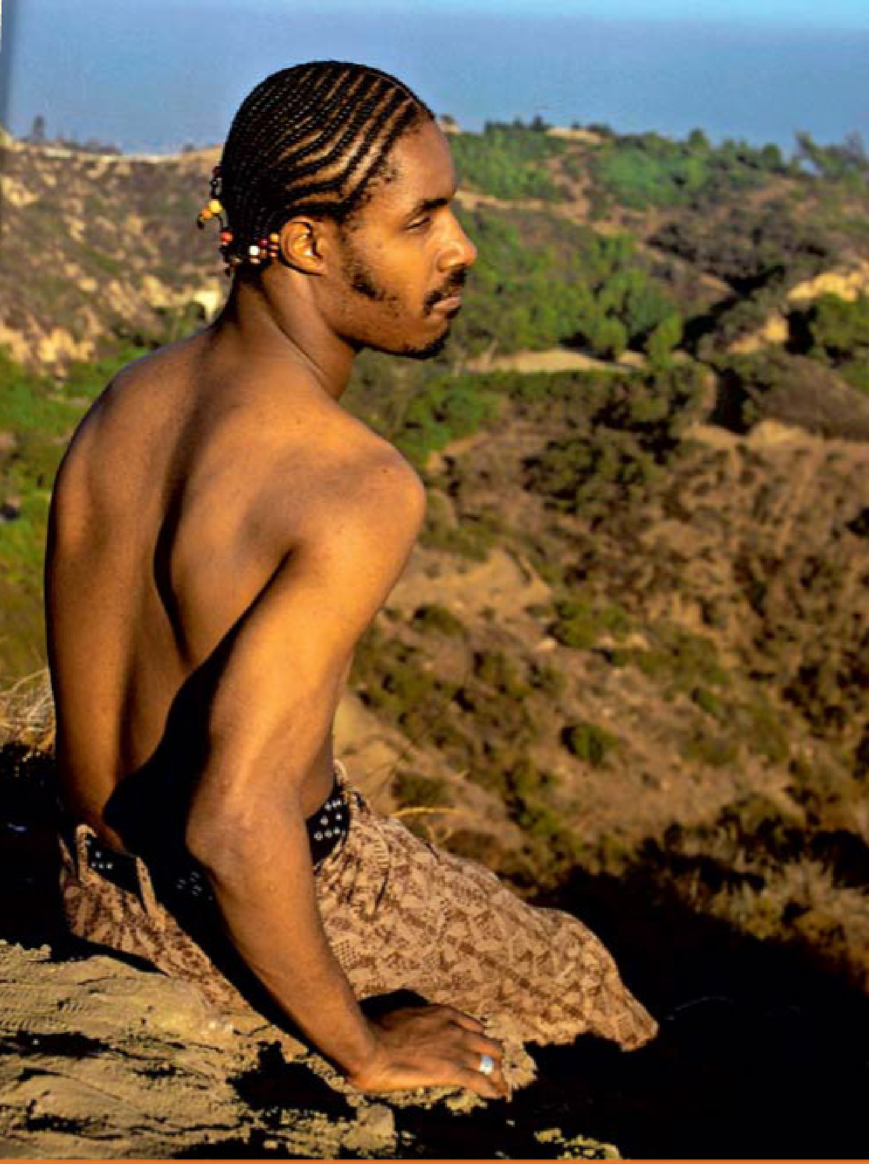
After the shows, the bacchanalia was "like being in the spin cycle of a dryer," laughs Sanborn. But not for the singer, who begged off the drugs and booze, if not the sex. "After the gigs, he would have all the keyboards hauled back to his hotel room and he'd play all night," says Parker. "I don't think he ever slept," adds Sanborn. "Almost every day, he'd come to soundcheck with a new tune."

The 51-date tour ended with three sold-out nights at Madison Square Garden. Plans for a shared double-live album of the show never materialised. But Stevie got what he wanted: attention from the FM rock radio crowd. "The tour helped him create a new stream of music," Sanborn says. "He wasn't Little Stevie Wonder of Motown any more."

> "SOME NIGHTS, IT WAS LIKE, 'BOO! GET OFF!' BUT AS SOON AS HE DID SUPERSTITION, EVERYTHING TURNED AROUND."
> **LANI GROVES**

The Wonder years: (clockwise from above) Stevie strikes out into unchartered territory, TOTP, 1971; on-stage with the Stones' Mick Taylor and Mick Jagger, Madison Square Garden, NY, July 26, 1972; putting his back into it in '72; getting into the groove with Jeff Beck in the same year; Hohner's Clavinet, the "closest Stevie could get to the guitar".

Getty (3), Alamy



"MOTOWN WAS LIKE THE OLD STUDIO SYSTEM IN HOLLYWOOD. THIS WAS LIKE THE YOUNG MAVERICK DIRECTORS TAKING OVER."
DAVID SANBORN

friend, but Motown had control over releasing singles. Amends were made, with Wonder eventually donating the exquisite Cause We've Ended As Lovers and Thelonius to Beck's smash hit 1975 album *Blow by Blow*.

On Superstition, there are three Clavinet tracks, ricocheting across the stereo spectrum like an interstellar pinball machine. Invented for Hohner in 1964 by German engineer Ernst Zacharias, the instrument was intended as an affordable home version of the clavichord, for those who wanted to play Baroque music. Under Wonder's splayed fingers, it became a way to approximate what Ray Parker Jr calls a "dirty, stinky, nasty" electric guitar. "Stevie's a frustrated guitar player," laughs Parker, who joined Wonderlove on guitar aged just 18. "He can play the heck out of everything else. But not the guitar. He's always buying some electric gadget that will get him closer to the guitar. Clavinet was as close as he could get."

According to Cecil, the "secret of Superstition was slap echo. While he was playing the keyboard, we would run back an echo on each note, which created an extra sound between the notes, even very quickly played notes."

"That's the Stevie Wonder feel," says Sanborn. "It's like Krakatoa! That shit is smouldering."

T*ALKING BOOK*, RELEASED OCTOBER 28, SEVEN months after *Music Of My Mind*, went gold, firmly establishing Wonder's transition to Albums Artist. The longer songs, the gatefold sleeve with lyrics and credits, the cover shot of Wonder in a kaftan with cornrows and, for the first time ever, no dark glasses – it was all a decisive *adieu* to Little Stevie. Within a year, the 150-song sojourn he began with Cecil and Margouleff would reach its peak with *Innervisions*, a balanced blend of sexy, spiritual and political. It was also the moment that reshaped Wonder's status as a genius.

Motown had used the G-word as a marketing ploy, and a way to tie their pint-sized prodigy to fellow blind artist Ray Charles. But given Wonder's evident ability to absorb the influences, perspectives and techniques of forebears and contemporaries, refashion them into a distinct language, then strike out into uncharted territory, it was beginning to look like something other than hyperbole.

"Music was just pouring out of him," says Lani Groves, who is happily retired but sang with Wonder at a recent Toys For Tots concert. "Every time his hand touched the piano or keyboard, you'd hear something you'd never heard before."

"Genius is kind of like jazz or pornography – you know it when you see it," says David Sanborn. "It's almost like Stevie created a destination. 'Stevie Wonder' is a place you want to go. You know what you're going to get but you're always going to be surprised. The volume of material there has such variety, but it clearly comes from one place. *Music Of My Mind* and *Talking Book* were just the start."

Ray Parker Jr is the subject of a forthcoming documentary, Who You Gonna Call? David Sanborn tours in 2022 with his acoustic band.

Amongst the vines and coyote dens of north Kentucky, JOAN SHELLEY's graceful, folk-adjacent songs take shape, but think twice before imagining her a pedlar of winsome pastoralia. Seven albums in, her feel for life's nuance is fuller than ever. "I don't want to be fooled by the romance," she tells JOHN MULVEY.

Photography by **MICKIE WINTERS**

THE THIRD SONG ON JOAN SHELLEY'S NEW ALBUM IS CALLED HOME AND THERE, more or less, is where she's been for the last two years. Her place is a sprawling plot outside Louisville, Kentucky, off roads uncharted by Google Maps, about six miles from where she grew up. An overgrown tree farm, filled with dogwoods and Christmas firs, maples and ornamentals, "a jungle of weeds and vines and coyote dens."

Towards the end of 2019, Shelley was wearying of life on the road. The time had come, as she expresses in a tour van song called When The Light Is Dying, to beat the retreat. Her songs, while not exactly folk music, had always reverberated with a sense of location and tradition, but now putting down roots – however unstable the ground might be – became more of an urgent narrative.

"I wanted to figure out a place so deeply I could cultivate the spirit of it in what I made," Shelley says today. "I could maybe try to speak for a place, but then I realised that was problematic as well. But I think about the trees here, and the plants, and there's no place like it."

Will Oldham, who records as Bonnie 'Prince' Billy and lives down the road from Shelley, knows what she means. "I've put a lot of energy into understanding what a commitment to place can mean," he says. "Kentucky is well-stocked with incredible people. It's also a challenged place. It's relatively easy to afford to live here, but there are costs related to education, healthcare, air and water toxicity and, unfortunately, political culture. To be as human as we possibly can be, we stay instead of leave and, in staying, grow to understand how the depth of connection makes something irreplaceable of our experience and our relationships."

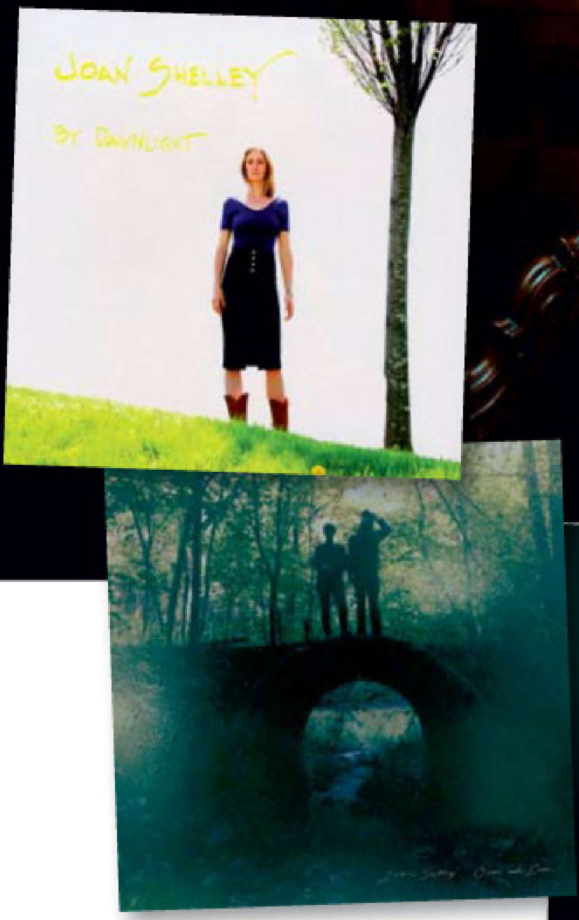
This, in essence, is what Shelley did as she prepared the songs for her seventh solo album, *The Spur*. She joined a local songwriters' group to woodshed ideas, and focused on being less of what the agrarian poet Wendell Berry, another Kentucky local, calls an "urban nomad". With her partner and collaborator, Nathan Salsburg, she made choices ahead of the ones that a pandemic would render non-negotiable. She locked down at home, wrote songs, raised goats and chickens, got married to Salsburg, recorded the songs with Salsburg in a nearby studio, gave birth to her first child and, imminently, is ready to release the best album of her quietly excellent career. "The result of a totally new radical life seems obvious now," she explains. "But at the time it's like, Everything's chaos!" ➢

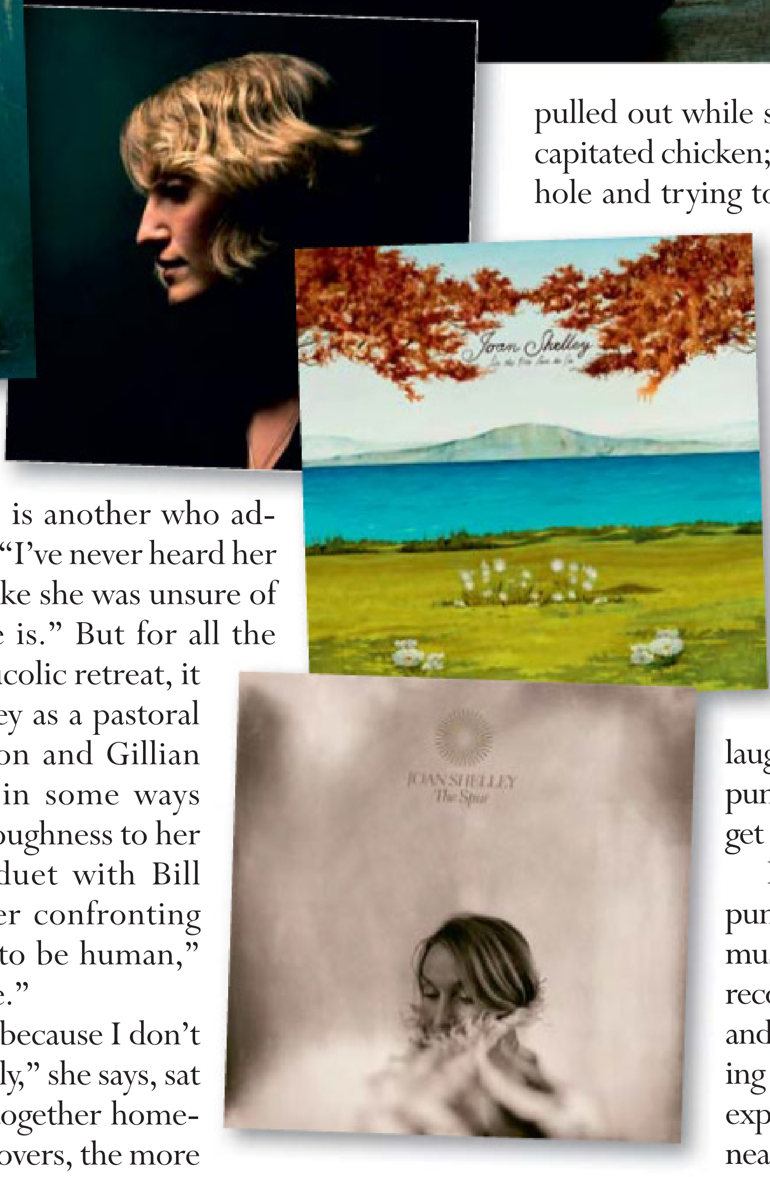
Mickie Winters

Porch songs: for Joan Shelley, trying to be a better writer is about "acknowledging and integrating the cruelties and rough edges of a place."

“THERE’S ABSOLUTE BEAUTY, AND THERE’S ABSOLUTE PAIN, AND I WANT TO BE IN THE MIDDLE OF IT ALL.”
Joan Shelley

Home is where the art is: Shelley takes in the view, Louisville, Kentucky, March 10, 2022; (opposite, clockwise from top left) hanging out with her chickens and cat; on-stage with Richard Thompson, 2017; with husband Nathan Salsburg, 2022; kicking back with Maiden Radio (Cheyenne Mize, left, Julia Purcell, centre) in 2015.





JEFF TWEEDY, WHO produced Shelley’s eponymous 2017 album, is another who admires her distinct sense of place: “I’ve never heard her sing a single note that sounded like she was unsure of exactly how far from home she is.” But for all the preoccupation with roots, the bucolic retreat, it would be a mistake to see Shelley as a pastoral romantic. Like Linda Thompson and Gillian Welch, two great singers she in some ways resembles, there’s a clarity and toughness to her vision: Amberlit Morning, a duet with Bill Callahan on *The Spur*, finds her confronting rural reality. “It takes so much to be human,” she sings, “and watch the bull die.”

“I fight my romanticism a lot, because I don’t think it makes me see things clearly,” she says, sat in the bedroom of her patched-together homestead. “I learned, first of all with lovers, the more romantic I was, the more there was in between us, and then I would get something wrong. Horribly wrong. As you grow up, you see that everywhere. To try to be a better writer, it’s about acknowledging and accepting and integrating the cruelties and the rough edges of a place.

“It’s difficult, nuance. There’s absolute beauty, and there’s absolute pain, and I want to be in the middle of it all. I don’t want to be ruled by the doubt, and I don’t want to be fooled by the romance.”

“Joan has a steeliness about her that I think comes across in her songs,” says Nathan Salsburg, a week later. Salsburg tells a story of how, a few months back, their chickens were having tail feathers pulled out while still in their pen. One morning, they found a decapitated chicken; a possum or raccoon had been reaching through a hole and trying to yank the birds out. “Joan,” continues Salsburg, “put on her gloves and pulled this headless chicken’s body out of the side of the pen and went and buried it in a hole. She’s really no-nonsense around where we live. She does not shy away from death.”

JOAN SHELLEY GREW UP ON A SMALL horse farm outside of Louisville. Her father, a painter, was born there, but had lived in New York, married at the time to a model and on the periphery of Andy Warhol’s scene. “He won’t tell me his exact involvement, because he swears he’s never done a drug in his life,” she laughs. Growing up in the 1990s, she found the local punk and post-hardcore scene “scary. I was too young to get that they were kind people who just looked angry.”

Eventually she would return and discover that those punks could introduce her to bluegrass and English folk music, to Richard & Linda Thompson and June Tabor records. But first she went to college in Athens, Georgia, and lived in Buenos Aires for a while. “I remember feeling like piles of trash were all around me, my last city experience – I couldn’t handle the waste. I needed to be near a green place again, to come home in a big way.”

Back in Louisville, she fell in and out of bands – enduringly a trio called Maiden Radio, who released three albums of mostly traditional folk songs between 2010 and 2015. She also, beginning in 2010 with the self-released *By Dawnlight*, embarked on a tentative solo career. Since then, her catalogue has swollen to seven albums that often balance a precise understanding of her home turf with perspectives garnered from touring and recording further afield. So 2019’s *Like The River Loves The Sea* found her relocated to a studio in Iceland, while *Joan Shelley* (2017) was recorded in Chicago with Jeff Tweedy and artists in Tweedy’s orbit (the producer/multi-instrumentalist

Mickie Winters (4), Courtesy Joan Shelley/Instagram, Steven Sandick, Getty (2), Nathan Salsburg

James Elkington, Tweedy's drumming son Spencer) who continue to figure prominently on both Shelley and Salsburg's records.

2015's superb *Over And Even*, in contrast, was written in that other Athens, Greece, after a Leonard Cohen-like venture to write on a Greek island turned into what she ruefully describes as "a total nightmare".

"I was supposed to go over there with someone who told me they helped people write songs – like, 'Come to Greece, you're gonna see this amazing island, write these songs and do all this sailing!'" she recalls. "I ended up trying to write in the hours before this person woke up, in this tiny room with no light, and eventually realised how unhealthy the situation was. He was like, 'I can hypnotise a woman to have an orgasm.' And I was like: I'm gone, I'm out. I would rather be deeply alone than anywhere near this."

SHELLEY TALKS ABOUT THAT TIME IN Athens as being "the farthest from other people I knew I'd ever been." But *The Spur*, worked on through lockdowns and false springs, at one remove from the world, is perhaps the most communally-oriented of her records. The group of local songwriters that she joined in early 2020 continued to meet online, setting each other creative tasks and challenging their songwriting processes. "In the most isolated time in my life," she wonders, "I happened to be the most collaborative."

Gradually, this apparently random lockdown project coalesced into an album's worth of songs. "Something needed to get done," says Salsburg. "We were living this very blissful life, which is kind of fucked up to say, but we loved the chance of being home for a while."

In the spring of 2021, Shelley – by now seven months pregnant – and Salsburg booked into a studio in Shelbyville 30 miles away and recorded the basic tracks that became *The Spur*, before producer James Elkington, in Chicago, brought bass, drums, horns and strings to the warm, surprisingly organic-sounding mix.

Shelley and Salsburg were married in the county courthouse, and confirmed a relationship that had previously only been acknowledged as professional in the public domain. "I don't like sharing things on social media," she says, "but I chose to share. We're in a time of oversharing, and I think about the poor kids who are 12 years old and writing songs and getting put on YouTube. And I think about myself in that early stage and how I'm so thankful for the cover I had, for the space to come out of that little chrysalis and become something else that has a shape."

What has emerged this time, then, is a record about rooting in one place, conceived before lockdowns made that essential – an album about the consolations and uncertainties of nesting mostly written before she became pregnant. "Can musicians see the future?" she laughs. "Or is there a greater pattern?"

On Instagram, you can find a clip of Shelley playing a gig with her daughter Talya on her knee. When Talya reaches for the mike, Shelley seems magically attentive to the infant, but undistracted from her song. The moment has arrived, it seems, to step out of the homestead for a while. "We have such precious time," she says, "and I want to wrap the best things around ourselves and not really settle for making a buck or making the right financial decisions. There has to be a richness, or I'm not doing it."

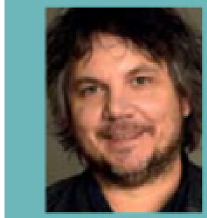
ST. JOAN

Joan Shelley, by her accomplished admirers.

NATHAN SALSBURG

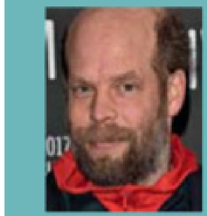
(Pictured with Shelley, above) "She's very oriented towards earthy things – having a garden, being in the woods, at the creek, being quiet, being stationary – those things are really vital to her creative process, vital to her human process. She has a very particular sense of nostalgia, a longing for home. It's not innocence: it's a deeply felt and experienced state she carries with her, because just as much as it's a yearning for the past, it's a kind of vision for the future."

JEFF TWEEDY



"Old songs have ways into our hearts that are well-worn and true, like how a path through a forest over time can become indelible. Any of us can follow along sure-footed and certain – secure in the knowledge that getting lost is an impossibility. Joan sings her own songs like that – like she's been tracing her own melodies along the contours of the natural world for centuries. Truly remarkable."

WILL OLDHAM

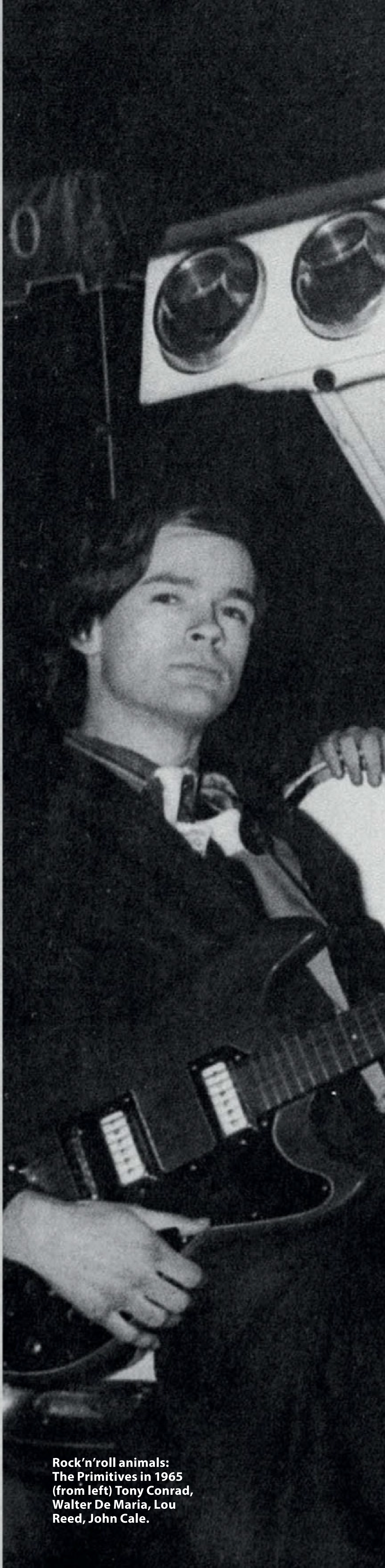


"She's an artist who comprehends some of the magic of those who've come before us; that it's magic, along with craft, that makes for strong songs. She's referential in her song-making while giving alchemy its necessary share of the burden. I love singing Joan's songs with her. It's like having the ghost herself hold your hand on a tour of her haunted mansions."

SOME VELVET MORNING

New light on the dawn of **THE VELVET UNDERGROUND** is shed by lost demos found among the effects of the late Lou Reed – who would have been 80 this year. MOJO digs the folk roots and formative years of a rock'n'roll hero, with help from Laurie Anderson, producer-archivist Don Fleming and more. "People are going to be blown away," they promise **WILL HODGKINSON**.

THE WORDS, STILL SO BOLD and transgressive after all these years, are instantly familiar. "When I put the spike into my vein, then you know that things aren't quite the same…"; "I'm waiting for the man, 26 dollars in my hand…"; and, displaying the rather more tender side Lou Reed did his best to suppress but which always bubbled up sooner or later, "Sometimes I feel so happy, sometimes I feel so sad…" ➢



From the Lou Reed Archive, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. Courtesy of Canal Street Communications, Inc © 2022 Canal Street Communications Inc

Rock'n'roll animals: The Primitives in 1965 (from left) Tony Conrad, Walter De Maria, Lou Reed, John Cale.

◄ Heroin, I'm Waiting For The Man and Pale Blue Eyes are sacred songs in the canon of the band that combined the primitivism of rock'n'roll with the sophistication of the avant-garde and the depth of literature, and cornerstones of underground rock. Yet to hear a tape containing their earliest demos, recorded on May 11, 1965 and locked away until now, is to hear traces of things rarely associated with The Velvet Underground: blues and folk, earthy and traditional, uncertain and hesitant… yet bristling with that rusty, caustic, Lou Reed spirit. It is a revelation.

"Later in his life, Lou didn't seem to *work* on songs. He wrote them and they were finished immediately," says Laurie Anderson, who met Lou Reed in 1992, married him in 2008, and has been working to preserve his legacy with the archivists Jason Stern and Don Fleming since his death in 2013. "So this was a huge surprise to me. Hearing the tape is like coming across some Folkways recording from the 1930s, it is that ancient. It has an eerie, rickety sound that suggests it was recorded in some old roadhouse. I mean, Heroin as a folk song? People are going to be shocked."

Venus in Furs
ILLUSTRATED
9/6
The Most Celebrated Masochist Story Ever Written!
By Leopold von Sacher-Masoch
A FAMOUS CLASSIC OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SEX AND CRUELTY, NOW FIRST OPENLY PUBLISHED IN BRITAIN

IF YOU'VE GROWN UP WITH THIS music, loved it for years, it will certainly give you pause. *This* Heroin is jaunty, you could almost say innocent, with Reed rushing through the words against a simple fingerpicked blues riff on a beat-up acoustic guitar. I'm Waiting For The Man sounds like a folk lament, with Reed and VU bassist/violist John Cale harmonising over a drug score in Harlem like they're playing a Greenwich Village hootenanny. Cale takes the lead on Wrap Your Troubles In Dreams, which would make its way onto VU singer Nico's 1967 solo album. His flattened Welsh tones establish a crepuscular mood, a precursor to the hypnotic minimalism he'd help inculcate in the full-blown Velvets.

"That's the moment it moves from Lou Reed and John Cale as a folk duo to The Velvet Underground," says Laurie Anderson. "Doesn't it make you think of German cabaret? It is such a sentimental song, so soupy and dark and ironic, and that period of music was very interesting to Lou… But he never wanted to admit it. It was a little too close to musicals for his comfort."

There are songs on the tape that never made it onto any of the four Velvet Underground albums, or even the myriad rarities collections. Men Of Good Fortune – the title of an entirely unrelated song on Reed's 1973 solo album *Berlin* – appears to be a rendering of a traditional ballad, with Reed narrating as a girl who is told by her mother, "An old maid I'd be, lest men of good fortune came courting to me." Yet the song appears to be an original.

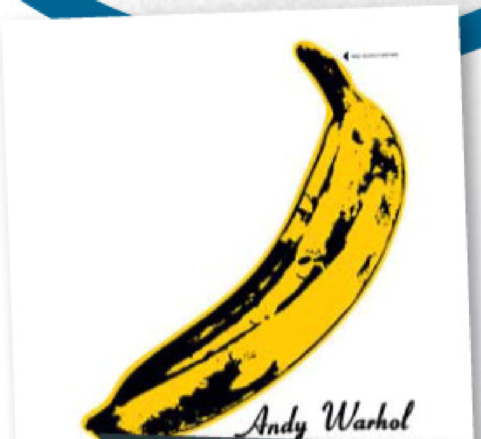
"When we heard Men Of Good Fortune we thought it must be a Child Ballad, or something from the Alan Lomax archive," says Don Fleming, a respected New York-based producer (Sonic Youth, Teenage Fanclub) who had been archiving Lomax's acres of field recordings. "But we couldn't find it."

Fleming shared the recording with MOJO contributor Greil Marcus, a writer steeped in America's oldest music. "He drew a comparison with the melody to the Merle Travis song Dark As A Dungeon, but that's as close as we could get."

Some songs seem in flux between the folk idiom and the urban darkness to come. Buttercup Song, a lost gem with mythical status among VU heads, is like a beery rugby singalong, with Reed raucously advising: "Never get emotionally involved/With a man or a woman or a beast or a child."

It's a treasure trove of throwaway chants, ancient blues, lamenting folk and droning, minimalist experimentalism. "Words and music by Lou Reed," intones Reed before each song on the tape. He

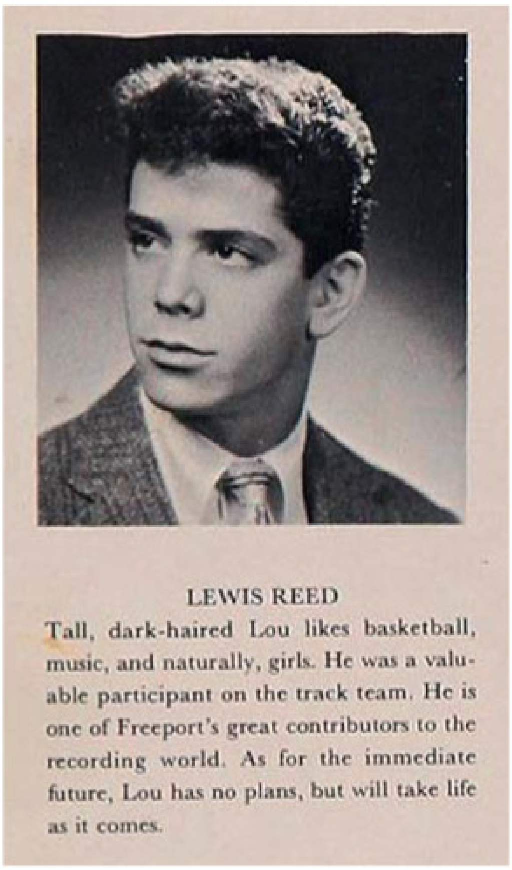
> **"HEARING THE TAPE IS LIKE COMING ACROSS SOME FOLKWAYS RECORDING FROM THE 1930s. I MEAN, HEROIN AS A FOLK SONG? PEOPLE ARE GOING TO BE SHOCKED."**
>
> *Laurie Anderson*



WHITE LIGHT/WHITE HEAT THE VELVET UNDERGROUND

Into the light: (clockwise from above) John Cale and Lou Reed of The Velvet Underground on-stage at Cafe Bizarre, 106 West 3rd St, New York, December 1965; Bob Dylan, April 1965; Reed with Laurie Anderson at the grand opening of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, Cleveland, 1995; Cale with Warhol star Edie Sedgwick, January 13, 1966; "no plans… will take life as it comes" – Lou Reed's Freeport High School Yearbook entry, 1959; The Primitives (from left) Tony Conrad, Lou Reed, Pickwick musician John Giuffre, Walter De Maria and John Cale, 1965.

From the Lou Reed Archive, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.. Courtesy of Canal Street Communications, Inc © 2022 Canal Street Communications Inc, Getty (4)



LEWIS REED
Tall, dark-haired Lou likes basketball, music, and naturally, girls. He was a valuable participant on the track team. He is one of Freeport's great contributors to the recording world. As for the immediate future, Lou has no plans, but will take life as it comes.

cannot say it without laughing as he introduces Heroin, as if in disbelief at his own audacity.

SO WHERE HAS ALL THIS REVELATORY MUSIC BEEN hiding? The five-inch reel-to-reel tape containing the recordings lived in an envelope on a shelf behind Reed's desk at his Sister Ray office in New York, and was discovered shortly after his death in 2013. Reed had posted the sealed, notarised package to himself, Lewis Reed of 35 Oakfield Avenue, Freeport, NY on May 11, 1965, as a form of copyright assertion, a way of proving he had written the songs by the date the parcel was posted. It had been sealed ever since. In 1996 Reed told David Cavanagh in Q magazine of the existence of the legendary 'copyright' tape, but dismissed its relevance. "I'm not going to listen to it," he said. "I don't want to hear these things any more." And Reed wasn't the only one who wondered if it should ever be disturbed.

"I was the guy who said we shouldn't open the package," says Jason Stern, who alongside Fleming was tasked with archiving everything from Reed's 1958 recordings with his Freeport high school band The Jades to his final performances in 2013, alongside countless photographs, letters and tour posters. "I thought we should preserve the mystery. It was just sitting there on a shelf amongst all these CDs and Lou had spent his entire life never unsealing it, so what are the chances it would contain anything unique? I couldn't be more thrilled to have been proven wrong."

After offering the Reed archives to the New York Public Library, and being told that once the collection was acquired it would be much harder to authorise opening the package, in 2017 Stern and Fleming took the plunge. There was no information inside, no song titles, but the notary's signature and stamp revealed him to be one Harry Lichtiger, a 52-year-old partner of Nassau chemists in Baldwin, NY who in 1954 had been found guilty of dispensing Seconal capsules, known as red devils, and had paid a $700 fine.

Nassau was down the road from the post office in Baldwin, so Reed appears to have got the package notarised by Lichtiger before heading off to Pickwick Studios in Long Island where he and John Cale, having met at Pickwick in late '64, laid down a handful of tracks including the first known – until now – version of Heroin.

"We don't know where the copyright tape was recorded," says Don Fleming. "At one point Laurie was in the car with John Cale and she played him Wrap Your Troubles In Dreams. He couldn't recall any details, although he did sing along to it, and we do know that he and Lou went into Pickwick on the day Lou posted the package to himself. Pickwick would use his songs for various bands, with the other songwriters in the writing pen sharing the credits, so it seems he was trying to protect his best material."

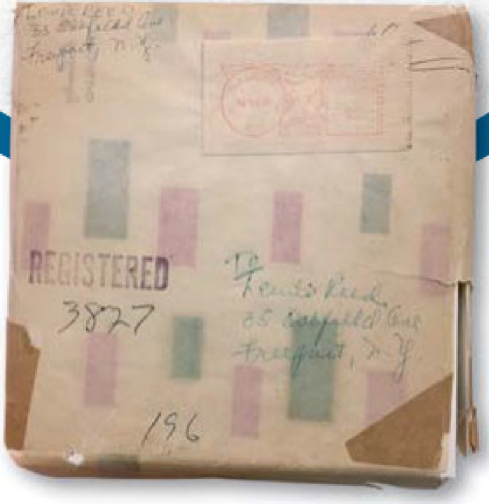
Reed was working as a songwriter for hire, re-hashing the hits of the day in a job that he would describe as being a "poor man's Carole King". Pickwick's Terry Phillips wanted Reed to help make the label more creative, to do more than just knock off the latest Everly Brothers or Beach Boys hit. "He can't sing, he can't ➢

play," reasoned Phillips, "but everything resonates in that crackly voice of his."

In his biography What's Welsh For Zen, John Cale recalls Lou Reed playing him material that later became Velvet Underground classics "as if they were folk songs". These are those folk songs.

"I WAS THE GUY WHO SAID WE SHOULDN'T OPEN THE PACKAGE. I THOUGHT WE SHOULD PRESERVE THE MYSTERY."

Archivist Jason Stern



"THAT'S A RATHER pubescent question, don't you think?" Lou Reed asked this writer, during a typically fractious 2012 encounter in Prague. That was shortly before he told a polite Czech make-up artist, after she did her best to prepare him for a photo shoot: "You made me look like a fucking zombie!"

None of this came as much of a surprise: Reed had by then spent decades making mincemeat out of the media. In 2000 he told a Swedish television presenter that "journalists are the lowest forms of life. Mainly the English. They're pigs". And that was him in a good mood.

The roots of Reed's legendary antipathy – which brought to The Velvet Underground such a spirit of loner defiance and which seemed to crumble away, say friends, once the defensive barrier had been broken – lay in the rejection of his earliest music. And when the critics' initial disdain was later revised to blanket adulation of the VU's work, Reed's contempt for them only deepened.

His hostility owed much, too, to childhood in Freeport, where his family had moved from Brooklyn when Reed was nine and his father had given up dreams of being a writer for the less romantic world of accountancy. "Coming to this isolated suburban community… that was a hard, hard transition for Lou," said his sister Merrill, who in 2015 wrote how her brother was routinely beaten up after school and dealt with it by isolating himself in his bedroom. Merrill described him as "increasingly anxious, avoidant and resistant to socialising, unless it was on his terms".

Solace was found in music. Reed discovered doo wop – a lifelong love – and learned to play guitar in his early teens, before forming a band. Club dates took him to the city and – much to his parents' shock – into contact with New York's drug subculture. "The stage was set," wrote Merrill Reed in 2015. "Anxious, controlling parents, a child whose issues exceeded their understanding, a society that valued secrecy, underlying mental health issues – add in rock'n'roll and drugs and the drama began."

That drama reached a peak when, having entered New York University in September 1959, aged 17, Reed returned home after a nervous breakdown. After seeking out therapy, his increasingly desperate parents took medical advice and agreed to his receiving electro-convulsive therapy at Long Island's Creedmoor Psychiatric Center: 24 shocks over several weeks, causing agonising pain, memory loss and psychic humiliation. Reed expressed his rage at his parents subjecting him to ECT in the 1974 song Kill Your Sons, but suggestions that they did it to cure him of homosexual tendencies, stated by Reed himself in a 1979 interview with Creem magazine, have been denied by his sister. "My parents were many things, but they were blazing liberals. Homophobic, they were not."

THIS PERIOD OF EXPOSURE TO NEW YORK CITY FED into the earliest Velvet Underground songs. In Todd Haynes' 2021 documentary on the band, Reed's old girlfriend Shelley Albin recalls how he would take her on drug-scoring trips to Lexington Avenue and 125th Street in Harlem, later to be immortalised in I'm Waiting For The Man, when both were students at Syracuse University. "He liked taking me to places that were not safe," said Albin, whose subsequent split from Reed would inspire the song Pale Blue Eyes. "He was setting up a scenario that then he would have material to write about."

The copyright tape's version of Pale Blue Eyes is one of its most fascinating. The melody is much the same as the cut familiar from *The Velvet Underground*, but its original, later abandoned, lyrics seem to speak of guilt at Reed's exposure of Albin to New York's grimy underbelly. "Remember when I first met you/You were clean and pure/I made you into what you weren't/What was I good for?" The song ends with some classic Reed vitriol. Having spotted his lover with a new man, he surmises: "Not that I'm complaining/Just as soon see you dead/Even when I loved you/Hoped you'd get hit in the head."

"It's about being a beginner," reckons Laurie Anderson of the prototype version of Pale Blue Eyes. "He was learning to write. He

From the Lou Reed Archive, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. Courtesy of Canal Street Communications, Inc © 2022 Canal Street Communications Inc (2)

SPOOL IT DOWN!

The 11 songs of the 'Legendary Copyright Tape'. Annotated by **WILL HODGKINSON**

I'M WAITING FOR THE MAN

This languid version of the VU classic has John Cale speaking the line, "I'm just waiting for a dear, dear friend of mine", while Lou Reed ad-libs, "I'll catch him next time" before blowing on his harmonica.

MEN OF GOOD FORTUNE

Not the *Berlin* song, but a ballad sung by Reed from the point of view of a woman who never married one of the titular moneybags. It sounds like a traditional folk song, but probably isn't.

HEROIN

The now earliest-known version is markedly Dylan-esque. As in the *Peel Slowly…* demo, the line, "All the politicians making crazy sounds" has yet to replace, "all the animals making sounds".

TOO LATE

A mostly unknown song displaying evidence of Reed's early love of doo wop, this has John Cale duetting on vocal harmonies. Lou does some nice whistling half way through.

BUTTERCUP SONG

Long mythologised but not heard until now, here is one of Reed's strangest moments: a raucous singalong advising the listener not to get emotionally involved with anyone or anything.

WALK ALONE

A playful call-and-response between Reed and Cale about the benefits of the solitary life, possibly. Reed: "When you make love, coitus, you know you've gotta make it alone."

BUZZ BUZZ BUZZ

A bit of Chuck Berry rock'n'roll amid the folkiness, with Reed relating a classic teen gripe: he's called his girlfriend but she's not picking up.

PALE BLUE EYES

The tune is familiar but the words – "Wake up in the morning/'Bout half past three/I don't mind the darkness so much/It's just it makes me think about me" – are almost entirely different.

STOCKPILE

Reed in one of his throwaway moments, knocking out a basic 12-bar blues about the hassle of having to work for a living.

WRAP YOUR TROUBLES IN DREAMS

A gothic vignette with Cale on lead vocals against minimal acoustic guitar. Time is kept with a slow tap… tap… tap, as of a drumstick on a metal pipe.

I'M WAITING FOR THE MAN (2)

A second recording of the future VU fave is much the same as the earlier one, except it is in the key of E rather than F.

Scotch
recor
3M
ALL PURPO

THE VELVET UNDERGROUND

Recurring dreams: (clockwise from above) The Theatre Of Eternal Music, New York, December 12, 1965 (from left) Tony Conrad, La Monte Young, Marian Zazeela, John Cale; Moe Tucker on-stage with The Velvet Underground, January 13, 1966; Andy Warhol (left) with VU's Tucker, Sterling Morrison and Reed; Arthur Rimbaud, 1871.

the velvet underground loaded

would be out on the road, playing the song, getting comfortable with it, trying it out. Then you go into the studio and you worry that you will paralyse the song because it's not going to change once you record it. Lou enjoyed changing songs on the road, seeing how audiences reacted and adapting them accordingly."

Reed was also engaging in a literary milieu that would shape Velvet Underground songs fundamentally. "I wanted to use the language of Tennessee Williams, William Burroughs, Hubert Selby Jr and Allen Ginsberg and put it into a rock song," Reed told me, in a rare ceasefire during that insult-filled encounter in Prague. "I thought that would be amazing, the greatest thing, if you could put lyrics worthy of *that* with *that*."

Reed first found his voice as a chronicler of hustlers, drag queens and others you didn't find among the picket fences of Freeport back in 1962, when he published Lonely Woman Quarterly – a literary magazine named after a piece by saxophonist Ornette Coleman – from the campus at Syracuse. In a short story called And What, Little Boy, Will You Trade For Your Horse?, he wrote about a young hustler who trawls the pornographic bookshops and cinemas of Times Square before being picked up by "a regular queen" in a gay bar. That summer he wrote a letter to Shelley Albin, after she returned to her native Illinois, about a boy called Waldo who mails himself to his girlfriend in a sealed box, only for her to use a sheet metal cutter to open the package with predictably tragic results. VU fans will recognise the story from The Gift, a highlight of 1968's *White Light/White Heat*.

In the September term of '62, Delmore Schwartz started teaching at Syracuse. A brilliant writer whose fragile mental health and drink and drug addictions curtailed early productivity, and who provided Saul Bellow with the model for the frustrated, uncompromising Von Humboldt Fleisher in his novel Humboldt's Gift, Schwartz taught his students to appreciate the rhythmic musicality of James Joyce, W.B. Yeats and other giants of 20th century literature. "Once, drunk in a Syracuse bar," Reed remembered of his mentor, "he said, 'If you sell out, Lou, I'm gonna get ya.'"

"Bob Dylan and Lou actually had a fight about who between them was Rimbaud," says Anderson, citing the French symbolist poet admired by both. "Who is the real Rimbaud? They were both writers, I think, before they were singers, and they were both *literate* songwriters, not just people who were rhyming it. The main thing I saw from Lou's archive is that he was always working on a lot of different ways of writing. After The Velvet Underground finished, he thought he would be a poet. He wrote a book about Tai Chi in the same lyrical language he used in his songs." ➢

Getty (3) Photofest

WHILE REED WAS FINDING ways to turn the life and literature of Gotham's demi-monde into song lyrics, an erudite Welshman was making his own discovery of the city. John Cale, the son of a coal miner and a nurse, brought up in his grandmother's house in the Amman Valley where the use of English was banned, learned to play Paganini on the viola aged seven, joined the Welsh National Youth Orchestra at 13, and at 18 landed a scholarship to study music at Goldsmiths in London. Influenced by the pioneering conceptualism of John Cage and Cornelius Cardew, in April 1963 Cale won a Leonard Bernstein scholarship to travel to New York where his first reaction was, in his own words, "Holy shit, this place is filthy."

Reassurance was found in the work of La Monte Young, whose Theatre Of Eternal Music/Dream Syndicate ensemble Cale joined and whose minimalist pieces were intended to bring the listener to a higher spiritual state. Cale had moved into an apartment on Ludlow Street on the Lower East Side with his fellow Theatre Of Eternal Music member, the violinist and mathematician Tony Conrad. At a party Conrad had met Terry Phillips of Pickwick, who was looking for musicians to make up a band to perform The Ostrich, the brilliantly nonsensical rock'n'roll dance tune Lou Reed had written on a guitar with all of the strings tuned to D. Conrad took John Cale and an artist friend of theirs called Walter De Maria with him on a visit to Pickwick's studios where Cale, intrigued by Reed's drone-friendly guitar approach, formed an initial impression of his future bandmate as "bruised, trembling, quiet and insecure". In late 1964, all four formed a band called The Primitives to perform The Ostrich live, and although the single went nowhere, the seeds of The Velvet Underground were sown.

"Lou was totally in love with the old blues singers," says Laurie Anderson. "That was his first influence. But as soon as he would plug in and crank up the sound, a song that started out as sweet and simple would go…" Anderson imitates the roar of guitar feedback to illustrate Reed's move from folky intimacy to brain-crushing rock'n'roll. "It was really about being loud. The same could be said of Dylan. Lou loved to be able to hit the pedal and change the feel of the entire song, but he would go back and forth between folk and rock. He did that all his life."

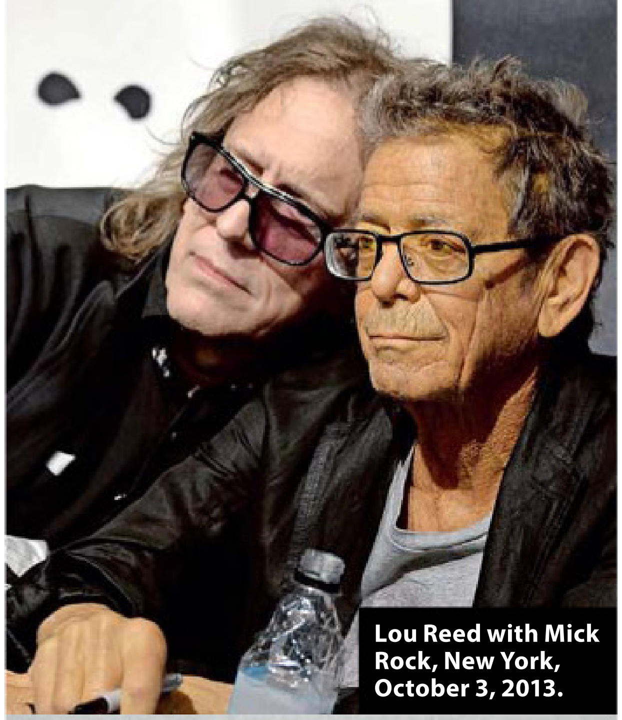
While there's no record of where Lou Reed's earliest extant collaboration with John Cale was recorded, we do know that a version of Heroin from July 1965, which made it onto the 1995 VU box set *Peel Slowly And See*, was made at Cale's Ludlow Street apartment. "I was writing about pain, about reality as I knew it," said Reed of his early material. According to John Cale, songs like Heroin and I'm Waiting For The Man are "not about drugs. They are about guys who are sick and dissatisfied with their lives." The version of Heroin on the unearthed copyright tape starts with the line, "I know just where I'm going," a significant difference to, "I don't know just where I'm going," as the version went on *The Velvet Underground & Nico*. It consists of just two chords, with Reed finger-picking a simple melody on the guitar.

"Lou Reed continued that finger-picking style his whole career," says Don Fleming. "You hear it on I'll Be Your Mirror and even [from *White Light/White Heat*] Lady Godiva's Operation. There is a pedal turned on, but he's still picking away. Those earliest influences, folk and blues… never left him."

Cale felt that the original tenor of Reed's songs, influenced as they were by Bob Dylan and the acoustic folk music dominant in early-'60s New York, in no way matched up to the intensity of the words. Listening to these versions, as lovely and as pure as they are, you can see his point. As Cale put it: "The idea that you could combine R&B and Wagner was around the corner."

JOHN CALE MAY HAVE BEEN looking for ways to bring the intellectualism of the avant-garde into the pop age, but Lou Reed was a lifelong believer in rock'n'roll. "You don't have to know anything," he told me during that 2012 interview, outlining his philosophy of music. "You hear it, you feel it… If you have to think about it, maybe it's not so good. Guys with classical music that you have to listen to for an hour, two hours… This stuff comes out and you hear it in 10 seconds. It's the vibe that's astonishing and that's why it has taken off. It's not just a bunch of guys with loud guitars. It's the same beat as the heart."

Nevertheless, Cale's classical contribution was essential. As a song about a sado-masochistic interdependency, Venus In Furs was revolutionary in its lyrical content, but in its initial form it sounded not unlike Scarborough Fair. It was Cale's screeching viola that brought to it a tone of danger, and it was the pair's impoverished lifestyle on the fringes of New York bohemia over the winter of 1965 that provided the inspiration. Selling blood at donation centres, posing as criminals for true crime magazines for money ("When John's picture came out it said he had killed his lover because his lover was going to marry his sister," recalled Reed), they bumped into Reed's old Syracuse college friend Sterling Morrison one day on the subway and invited him back to the Ludlow Street apartment for a jam. An artist friend called Angus MacLise joined on drums and they did a handful of shows against projections of underground movies at Jonas Mekas's Film-Makers' Cinematheque, first as the Warlocks, then occasionally the Falling Spikes, until Tony Conrad brought to the Ludlow Street apartment a pseudo-academ-



Lou Reed with Mick Rock, New York, October 3, 2013.

LOU REED: THE LAST INTERVIEW

WILL HODGKINSON remembers a final encounter, laced with sincerity and surrealism.

ON SEPTEMBER 5, 2013, I sat down with Lou Reed and Mick Rock, the photographer who captured Reed's Kabuki-like image on the cover of his 1972 masterpiece *Transformer*. We were on-stage at the Scala cinema in London's King's Cross – where the photo was taken during a concert on July 14, 1972 – before a live audience to talk about a glossy book of photographs from the *Transformer* days. On October 27, Reed was dead. Bar a promotional video he made for Parrot Zik headphones three weeks later, it was the last interview he did.

What traces remained of the ambitious young songwriter on the May '65 copyright tape in the frail, fastidious, 71-year-old man I met at the Scala, it is hard to say. But a certain dry, surrealist wit had survived through the years. At the Scala, Reed called upon the audience to admire the shapeliness of his legs before announcing proudly that his striped shirt and leather trousers were by the New York designer Rick Owens – but not his slippers. We took Lou Reed too seriously at our peril.

That night, Reed gave the occasional insight into his songwriting process. "I wrote I'll Be Your Mirror for Nico. Every single word was meant for her… to make her feel better about herself," he announced. Of *Transformer*'s Vicious: "Andy [Warhol] said to me, 'Oh, Lou, you're so lazy. How many songs did you write today?' 'Er, I wrote five.' 'Five? What's wrong with you? You'll never get anywhere with an attitude like that. Why don't you write a song called Vicious, You Hit Me With A Flower?' And I went, whoops, there it is."

What really became clear, over an hour in which Reed was variously playful, dismissive and contemplative, was that he saw rock'n'roll as his art, and he stayed true to it for the whole of his life. His fealty to the form began, arguably, with the handful of songs, recorded on May 11, 1965, that prepared a path for The Velvet Underground.

"I truly, truly, truly believe in the power of rock," said Reed, in clear, measured tones. "When you're feeling down or something… power rock, real rock, three minutes of it and you're transformed. You feel better. You're stronger. That's still true, but you need real rock'n'roll people to do it, not just a boy band or something. It's all about real belief. It's about the power of the heart."

"I TRULY, TRULY, TRULY BELIEVE IN THE POWER OF ROCK."
Lou Reed

Getty (5)

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THE VELVET UNDERGROUND
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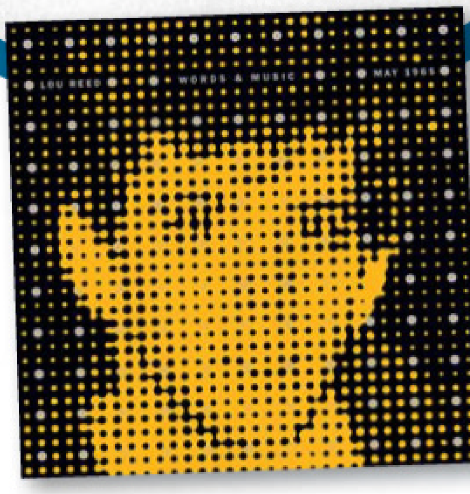
Here is an incredible book. It will shock and amaze you. But as a documentary on the sexual corruption of our age, it is a must for every thinking adult
BY MICHAEL LEIGH
INTRODUCTION BY LOUIS BERG, M.D.

Notes from underground: (clockwise from top left) Reed and Cale on-stage with The Velvet Underground, The Delmonico Hotel, New York, January 13, 1966; (inset) Michael Leigh's notorious paperback; author William Burroughs, 1965; the VU perform Venus In Furs for filmmaker Piero Heliczer, New York, November 1965.

> "I WANTED TO USE THE LANGUAGE OF TENNESSEE WILLIAMS, WILLIAM BURROUGHS, HUBERT SELBY JR AND ALLEN GINSBERG AND PUT IT INTO A ROCK SONG."
>
> Lou Reed



ic trash treatise on S&M called The Velvet Underground. After Lou Reed travelled out to Long Island to meet Moe Tucker, the sister of a friend, who spent her evenings playing along to Bo Diddley records on a snare drum, the band was born.

It is impossible to say what would have happened if Gerard Malanga hadn't caught a December '65 VU set at the Cafe Bizarre in Greenwich Village, leading to Malanga's employer Andy Warhol, then seeking a band to play a Long Island discotheque he had hired out as one of his many business ventures, bringing them into his coterie at the Factory. But it seems The Velvet Underground were always going to turn into something Reed liked to mention in his lyrics: a rock'n'roll band.

"Lou decided to go for rock'n'roll and that's what Andy saw," says Don Fleming. "The band meant a lot to him and that's why the reunion tour of 1993 happened, to revive those friendships. John Cale did not relate to the folky thing, even though he sang those harmonies well, and John is singing on Pale Blue Eyes which of course he doesn't do on the third Velvet Underground album [Cale had left by then]. What we hear on the tape is the sound of ideas forming and you don't get much sense of what was to come, except perhaps on Wrap Your Troubles In Dreams. For me, with Cale bringing in his influence from La Monte Young and the Dream Syndicate, Wrap Your Troubles In Dreams is the moment it moves from folk to The Velvet Underground."

"Before The Velvet Underground was a thing," Laurie Anderson says, "here was Lou and John, a little folk duo. Then you hear Wrap Your Troubles In Dreams and think: why wasn't that a Velvet Underground track? It is one of my favourite songs of all time and people are going to be blown away to hear it in this form."

Around the time Lou Reed and John Cale made these sweet, simple versions of songs that would go on to set the template for alternative music, Reed sent a letter to Delmore Schwartz. "NY has so many sad, sick people and I have a knack for meeting them," wrote Reed in 1965. "I can't resist peering, probing, sometimes participating, sometimes going right to the edge before sidestepping. Finding viciousness in yourself and that fantastic killer urge and worse yet having the opportunity presented before you is certainly interesting."

Interesting is not the word, for a journey that began with a five-inch Scotch tape, posted and then left unopened for over 50 years, before revealing a side to The Velvet Underground nobody ever thought they would hear. Ⓜ

Lou Reed: Words & Music, May 1965 will be released by Light In The Attic in summer 2022. Lou Reed: Caught Between The Twisted Stars is at New York Public Library from June 9.

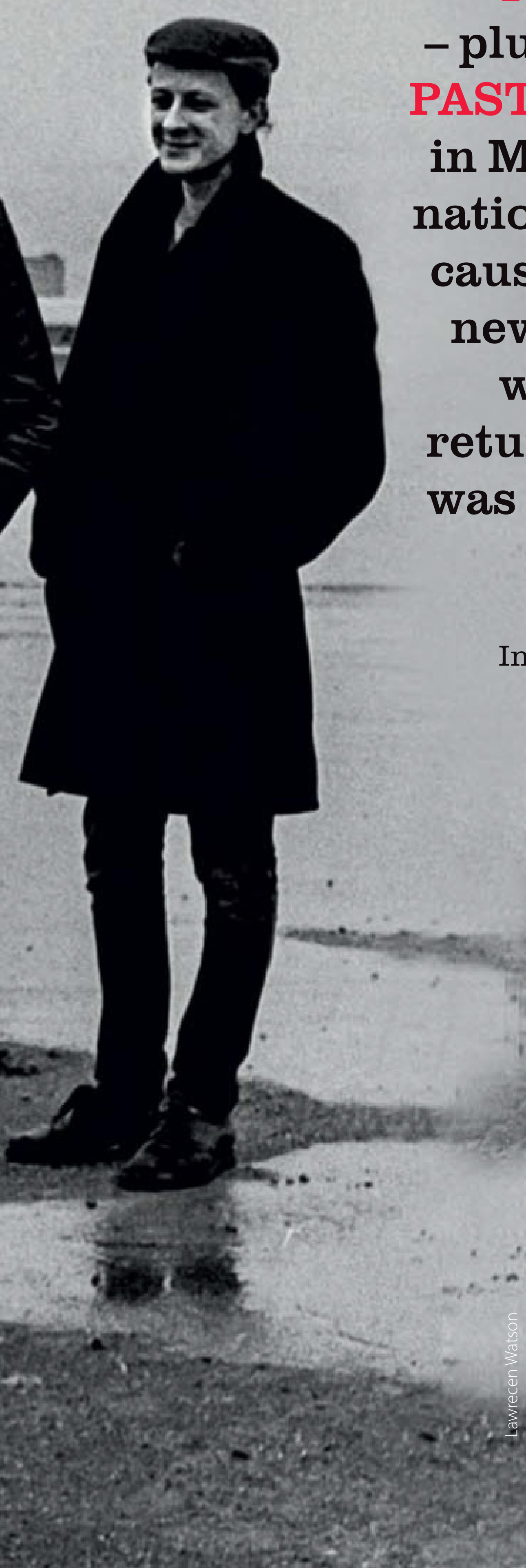
A gift that keeps on giving: The Wedding Present grin and bear their inclusion on the *C86* cassette (from left) David Gedge, Keith Gregory, Shaun Charman, Peter Solowka, London Docklands, 1986.

FRANK
TO HOLLY

C86 LAYS THE FOUNDATION OF INDIE POP

Compiling **PRIMAL SCREAM**, **THE WEDDING PRESENT** and **HALF MAN HALF BISCUIT** – plus **THE SHOP ASSISTANTS**, **BOGSHED**, **THE PASTELS** and 16 more – a mail order NME cassette in May '86 gave an aural snapshot of the UK indie nation. But as well as love, its mix of fey jangle and caustic confrontation also provoked disdain. As a new book tracks down those who were on it and where life took them next, the protagonists return to the scene of the crime. "The whole thing was completely hapless," they remember. "No one wanted to be known as a 'C86 band'…"

Interviews by **NIGE TASSELL** • Portrait by **LAWRENCE WATSON**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NME 022

David Gedge: In our minds, it was the culmination of a scene that had been bubbling for a year or two. We were lucky. We seemed to burst onto this scene where there were a lot of small, independent promoters, fanzine writers and like-minded bands. We'd find ourselves on bills with the likes of The Wolfhounds, The June Brides and Big Flame. I guess *C86* was an attempt to document that, to bring them all together on a compilation LP.

Adrian Thrills: There was a groundswell of vaguely like-minded, underground bands who were putting out great 7-inch singles on independent labels like Creation, Subway, Dreamworld, Probe Plus and Ron Johnson. The Smiths had cast a long shadow over independent music for the previous two years, so it felt good to have something fresh. I think Neil [Taylor, NME writer] came up with the original idea for the tape, and I remember the three of us sitting in Roy [Carr, NME special

➢

Independent minds: (clockwise from above) Primal Scream; The Pastels; The Wolfhounds; We've Got A Fuzzbox And We're Gonna Use It.

Lawrence Watson (2), Phil Nicholls, Peter Anderson

> **"THE PRESS CREATED C86 AND IT'S STRANGE IT ENDURED BECAUSE THEY REALLY TRIED TO KILL IT."**
>
> **David Westlake**

projects editor]'s office finessing the concept. The whole thing came together quickly, over a couple of months. Roy and I put the track listing together one night over a curry in his front room in Muswell Hill.

Dave Callahan: The whole thing was completely hapless. [The Wolfhounds] got given about 200 quid to record something, which at the time was more than 700 or 800 quid. We booked an afternoon in a studio and bashed out this thing for *C86*… it was the dumbest attitude. Primal Scream probably had the best attitude towards it. They seized the opportunity and did one of their best songs. We elbowed the opportunity away, putting one of our worst songs [Feeling So Strange Again] on it.

Martin St. John: John Peel played Velocity Girl loads. He must have flipped over the Crystal Crescent single. Actually, I don't know what came first – Peel playing it or the *C86* tape. But all of a sudden, that was the song. I remember recording it at a studio in Shawlands in Glasgow. There was a really good buzz playing it because it was only about a minute and 20 seconds long. All the stars aligned in that song. The guitar, the vocals, even my tambourine.

Rob McKahey: We knew there would be a lot of serious stuff on the tape, so we thought we'd chuck something funny like Buffalo on there to see what happened [Stump's song, with its lunatic refrain "Does the fish have chips?", would find fame later that year on TV music show The Tube]. But the recording is awful. It's atrocious. I don't know how it was even allowed on there. The NME gave us money, but we spent it. I think we got 50 quid, which in those days was a good few pints. So we had to go in somewhere and whack it down for a fiver.

Nigel Blackwell: I'm pretty certain the NME just rang up Geoff [Davies, Probe Plus label supremo]. God knows why they picked (I Hate) Nerys Hughes. Actually, I think I do. It would have been the one song Geoff understood. Geoff was very bohemian – he used to wear a beret – and when we first handed him the cassette, I didn't think he'd get the references. He doesn't do sport, for starters. But it was his wife at the time, Annie, who ran Probe with him, who got all the telly references – Bob Todd and all that. He'd have definitely chosen the Nerys Hughes one because he'd have heard of her. But if he'd had come over and asked us about it, I'd have said, 'Hang on, Dukla Prague [AKA All I Want For Christmas Is A Dukla Prague Away Kit] seems to be quite popular. Bung that on.'

AT: We wanted The June Brides, but there was talk of them not wanting to be pigeonholed. I was keen on having The Housemartins, but was outvoted on that. They were deemed a mainstream band and even as we were putting the tape together, they went from relative obscurity to being a fixture on Top Of The Pops. The selections went to the wire, as new bands were emerging all the time. We added Console Me, by We've Got A Fuzzbox And We're Gonna Use It, at the last minute.

Maggie Dunne: We were rawer, more of the punk DIY ethos than the others – even down to our clothes which we made. We were more rebellious than the whole lot put together. But because we were girls, we weren't seen like that. Things have thankfully moved on since then. If we'd happened a bit later, we'd be seen completely differently. I thought we were much more Great Rock 'n' Roll Swindle than any of them. We took on the boys and won.

John Williamson: I like it because it reminded me of how Throbbing Gristle would arrange their records. *The Second Annual Report* basically meant what they had done that year – and there it all is. There was no concept. Good and bad, there it is. That was the way you listened to *C86*. 'That's good. That's no good. That's rubbish. That's good…'

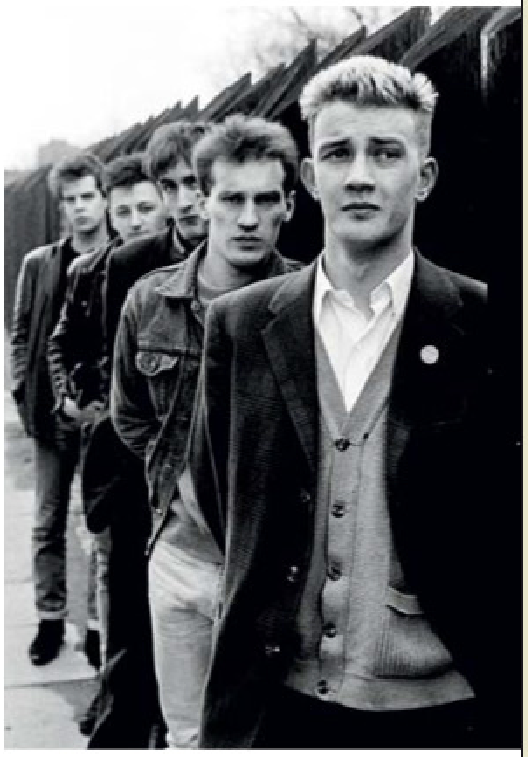
Russell Burton: Without naming names, unlike some others on the *C86* tape [Mighty Mighty] were writing fully formed pop songs. We are a pop group. We might not play them brilliantly, but it's not because we're not trying to play them well. We're more comparable to a band like Squeeze than to the Shop Assistants. We're more like The Pretenders than we're like Bogshed. But we happened to be on *C86*. No disrespect to Bogshed or the Shop Assistants, but we're a pop group and we were trying to sell records.

Stephen Pastel: Even if we'd not been on the tape, we'd have still been called a 'C86 band', so it was probably just as well to be on it. It seemed slightly narrow to me and I don't remember being especially excited at the time… [but] there was definitely a real vibe around the ICA gigs [C86 groups shared bills at a series of gigs in July '86]. People were really excited and most of the nights sold out.

DC: When [The Wolfhounds] played that *C86* gig at the ICA we were an unknown quantity, apart from our first EP. But we pretty much blew everyone else away… out in the audience at the ICA, I could see Tracey Thorn and Lindy Morrison from The Go-Betweens. I was like, "Yeahhhhh!" It was rammed and we went down really, really well. Every night was rammed that week.

Mike Bryson: Bogshed did a tour of Germany shortly afterwards. We arrived on the first night in Köln and parked the van up, not knowing where we were going to stay that night. We asked the first couple of young guys we met for instructions to a bar for something to eat. "Are you English?" "Yeah, we're in a band." And they knew who we were because of the *C86* tape. They put us up for the night, and then they introduced us to all their friends in different German towns, so we stayed with them on the tour, in different people's houses in different parts of Germany.

Andrew Burnett: The whole *C86* thing was supposed to be allied with this idea of independ-



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Your cassette pets: (clockwise from above) Stump; Close Lobsters; The Mighty Lemon Drops on-stage at the London ICA, July 25, 1986, during the NME *C86* week of gigs.

Phil Nicholls (3), Lawrence Watson (2), Getty (3), Alamy, Shutterstock, Avalon.red, Joe Dilworth, Ian Tilton, Andy @Birmingham_81, Steve Double, Tom Sheehan

ence, but to what extent did these independents just start to replicate the majors? The one [Close Lobsters] signed for was an independent that just acted like a major. When I say they acted like a major, I mean they didn't act in a professional manner. It was a constant embarrassment.

Paul Brotherton: There was no massive imperative to sign with [a major]. [The Bodines] didn't need lots of money or anything. But it was a terrible mistake. The label was called Pop, but it was Magnet who owned it. We signed to Magnet Records – home of Roland Rat and Alvin Stardust. It was tragic. You blow all that cred with the NME and the indie charts. They cut you dead. You don't get any hip reviews any more. You go from 'These are the guys who are really cool' to 'These are the guys who signed to Magnet' – despite being exactly the same band! So you have to make that leap a successful one by getting on Top Of The Pops and in the Top 40, otherwise you'll fall down the chasm and disappear, which is what happened to most bands.

RMcK: That Tube video [Stump appeared on the show on November 28, 1986] was ridiculous… I'd have people coming up to me in the street asking how much the fish was. People loved Buffalo. At gigs, we had to play it twice some nights. We should have released it as a single. Fuck knows why we didn't.

Tim Gane: For me, the big change in the late '80s was the arrival of Spacemen 3 and My Bloody Valentine. They really were another level. The ideas of My Bloody Valentine don't exist in the same realm as anything on *C86*. Spacemen 3 brought back an aspect of the garage sound but without being one of those silly garage bands that just dressed up and pretended they were in the '60s.

DG: A lot of bands did try to disassociate themselves from it. No-one wanted to be known as a 'C86 band'. It was a noose around their necks, in a way. Pretty soon, people were saying, 'No, we're not like all the other C86 bands.' I'm sure we said that in interviews too. I think everybody did.

AT: I think we were all surprised when it became a byword for indie music and 'C86' became synonymous with twee guitar bands, a certain strain of wilful amateurism, anoraks and pudding bowl haircuts. That was unfair on the bands, who all had their own individual ideas. Many of the *C86* bands were ultimately made to seem old hat by what followed, Madchester and acid house, but the fact that we're still talking about it 36 years on surely says something.

David Westlake: When you look into literary scenes or genres from the past, those authors didn't know they were in scenes or genres. It's only subsequently – often hundreds of years later – that they were imposed. The press created C86 and it's strange it endured because they really tried to kill it. They savaged it. It became an insult to say something was 'really C86.' But C86 is like the end of Halloween, when Michael Myers is dead. You think that must really be the end now, but he just sits up again.

MB: Most of our back catalogue is going to be re-released pretty soon… I'm not expecting to make any money whatsoever, but it will be nice to have it all out there, even just so that I can ask Alexa to "Play Bogshed." She gets confused when I ask her at the moment. She keeps playing me Shed Seven.

NB: I never paid much attention to it before, but now I love it… I always knew Stump and Bogshed, but I've started having different favourites. My initial favourites were Velocity Girl and [The Bodines'] Therese, and possibly the Mighty Mighty one, Law. But it's changing all the time. I really like the Pastels track as well. McCarthy? What a band. I genuinely like every track, although I ignore ours of course. I skip it. [But] I'm getting really au fait with it. It's like I'm actually in 1986 now – finally.

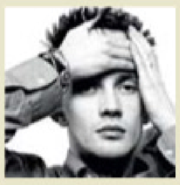
All interviews (except Adrian Thrills) extracted from Whatever Happened To The C86 Kids?: An Indie Odyssey. The book finds Nige Tassell meeting members of all 22 bands on the C86 cassette to hear about how the years treated them since. It's published by Nine Eight Books (hardback, audio and eBook) on August 18, 2022. Pre-order from Amazon and Rough Trade.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

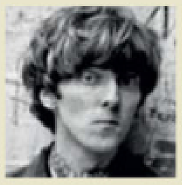
- **David Gedge (The Wedding Present, guitar/vocals)**

- **Stephen Pastel (The Pastels, guitar/vocals)**

- **Dave Callahan (The Wolfhounds, guitar/vocals)**



- **Andrew Burnett (Close Lobsters, vocals)**



- **Martin 'Joogs' St. John (Primal Scream, tambourine player)**

- **Paul Brotherton (The Bodines, guitar)**

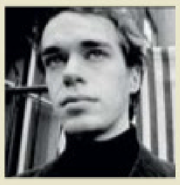
- **Rob McKahey (Stump, drums)**

- **Mike Bryson (Bogshed, bass)**

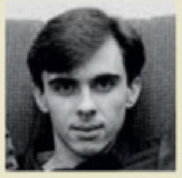
- **Nigel Blackwell (Half Man Half Biscuit, guitar/vocals)**

- **Tim Gane (McCarthy, guitar)**

- **Maggie Dunne (We've Got A Fuzzbox And We're Gonna Use It, bass)**

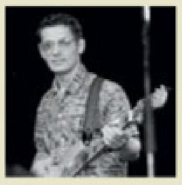


- **David Westlake (The Servants, vocals/guitar)**

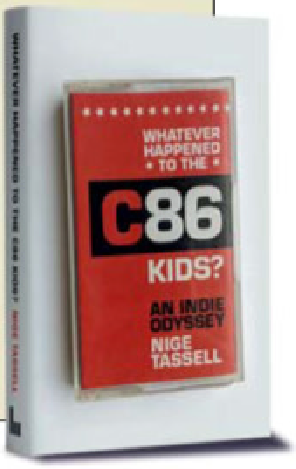


- **John Williamson (McCarthy, bass)**

- **Adrian Thrills (NME writer and C86 co-compiler)**



- **Russell Burton (Mighty Mighty, vocals/bass)**

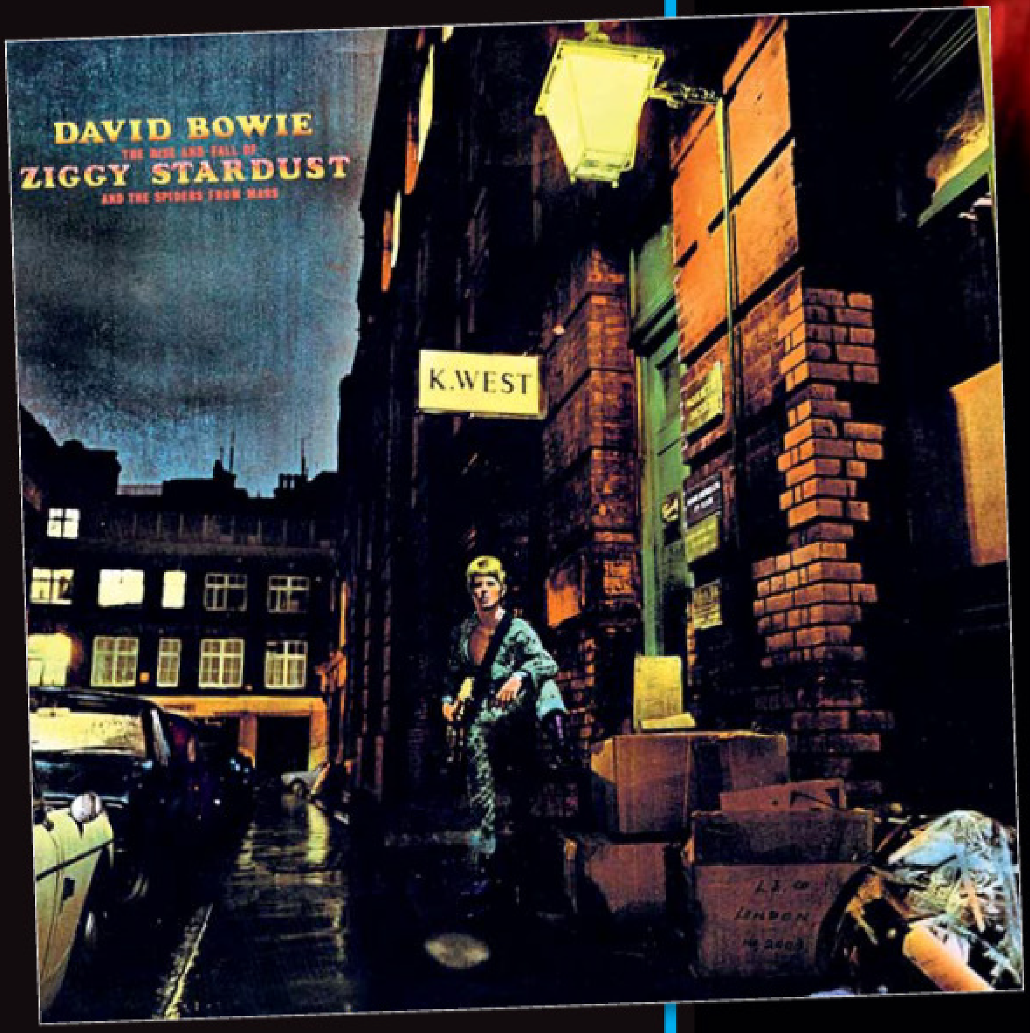


ZIGGY STARDUST 1972-2022

LOVING THE ALIEN

50 YEARS AGO, DAVID BOWIE RELEASED THE ALBUM THAT CHANGED HIS LIFE AND COUNTLESS OTHERS. A VOLLEY OF FEBRILE SONGS THAT TRASHED THE BOUNDARIES OF ROCK AND POP, A RIOT OF MAD IDEAS AND OUTRAGEOUS GEAR, *THE RISE AND FALL OF ZIGGY STARDUST AND THE SPIDERS FROM MARS* INVENTED A NEW KIND OF ROCK STAR – MAYBE, FOR SOME, AN ENTIRELY NEW WAY OF BEING. OVER 16 PAGES, BOWIE'S CLOSEST COLLABORATORS TELL MOJO ALL: "ZIGGY HAD TO BE SELF-CONFIDENT, STRANGE, UNUSUAL, DIFFERENT, ALIEN AND VERY TALENTED..."

PORTRAIT BY BRIAN WARD.



Screwed-up eyes and screwed-down hairdo: Ziggy moves in for his close-up, 1972.

STAR TURNS

KEN SCOTT ⚡ BOWIE LEARNS TO ROCK
WOODY WOODMANSEY ⚡ THE BAND FROM MARS
MIKE GARSON ⚡ AMERICA ❤ ZIGGY
ANGIE BOWIE ⚡ THE LIBERACE FACTOR
KRIS NEEDS ⚡ KISS OF THE SPIDER MAN
AND MUCH MORE...

It could be me: Bowie prepares to launch Ziggy, 1972; (below, from top) inspirations: Alice Cooper's Eighteen, Susan Sontag's Notes On 'Camp' essay, with Freddie Burretti on the cover of Curious, 1970.

THE CONCEPTION

"TOTALLY INVOLVED, TOTALLY NOT SERIOUS"

OVER 1971, SOMETHING WAS BREWING IN DAVID BOWIE'S BRAIN – A HYBRID ROCK'N'ROLL WHERE SEX AND SCI-FI MET. BY MARK PAYTRESS.

EARLY AUGUST 1971: BOWIE WAS FEELING "A LOT lighter", he told NME's James Johnson. Hunky dory, in fact, the title of the album he'd just finished recording. "It's been gloriously easy to record," Bowie added, his best album yet. It needed to be. His first three had all been failures.

Hunky Dory was everything Tony Defries, Bowie's ambitious manager since spring 1970, had been waiting for. At Defries's prompting, Bowie had signed a publishing deal that October, bought himself a piano and set about fixing what he called his "melody problem". Changes, Oh! You Pretty Things and Life On Mars?, each sounding like a contemporary standard, dominated the early part of the record. Deeper into the album, cuts like Eight Line Poem, Song For Bob Dylan and Biff Rose's Fill Your Heart were geared towards the US market. Perhaps not coincidentally, Bowie's fellow Tin Pan Alley grafter Elton John had recently broken big in the States.

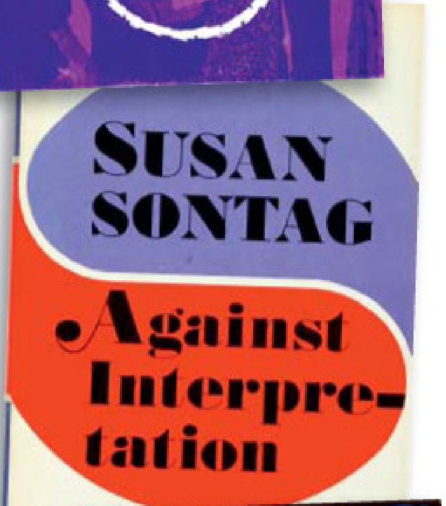
> "BOWIE HAD NEVER SUNG WITH SUCH ELASTICATED VENOM, NOR TO SUCH A SCREECHING, ELECTRIC BACKING."

Mid-month, while NME readers were learning of Bowie's new "totally involved, totally not serious" philosophy, Defries was in New York persuading RCA Records that David Bowie was a future Elvis – still the label's crown jewel – rather than a second Elton. Shaking hands on a three-album deal, Defries returned to London and told Bowie he'd secured his future.

In early September, in New York to meet his new backers, Bowie was introduced to Lou Reed and Iggy Pop. He'd been covering Reed's Velvet Underground songs since 1967. Errant Stooges frontman Iggy was a more recent discovery. Finding common ground with urban USA's premier *outré* anti-stars had a profound effect on him. At Bowie's suggestion, plans were hatched to bring both over to Britain in the new year.

Fired up by his brush with kindred spirits, Bowie returned to London convinced that *Hunky Dory* – still three months away from release – was already old hat. Seeing his old mate Marc Bolan fronting a four-piece rock band and transforming British pop with effortless-sounding pop hits, while creating headlines with his enchanted persona, further encouraged him to accelerate.

ALICE COOPER
eighteen
body



Getty, Mick Rock (2)

The intention behind *Hunky Dory* had been to spotlight Bowie's songwriting gifts and transatlantic appeal. That would still serve a purpose. But Bowie's MO had rarely been to take the systematic approach. Between intermittent gigs, mostly playing as a duo with guitarist Mick Ronson, Bowie booked 10 days in a cheap rehearsal studio in October with drummer Woody Woodmansey and new recruit bassist Trevor Bolder, who'd been on board since early June. This time Bowie envisaged a much rawer band sound.

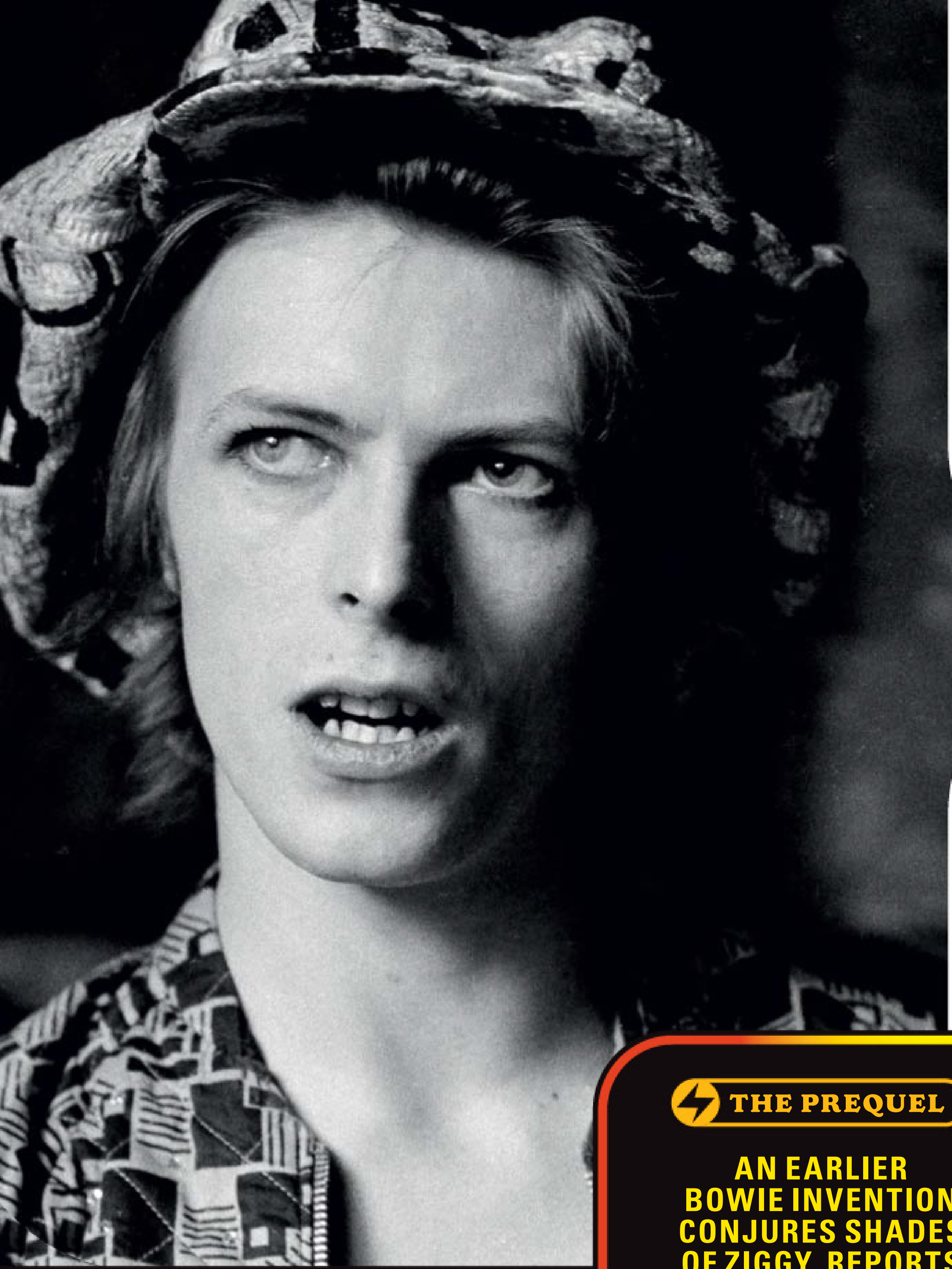
The template was already there on *Hunky Dory*. Queen Bitch, the climactic performance before The Bewlay Brothers' comedown, was the sound of Bowie and his fledgling Spiders From Mars unzipping themselves for action. "Oh yeah!", Bowie starts provocatively over the song's sashaying three-chord-trick, a handsome conflation of Eddie Cochran and Lou Reed. It's tempting to hear in the rising hysteria of Bowie's "It could have been me" refrain his frustration in seeing his arguably lesser-talented peers pip him to the big time. Bowie had never sung with such elasticated venom, nor to such a screeching, electric backing before. But behind the scenes, under cover of anonymity, he'd been flirting with a more flamboyant style for months.

THE CATALYST HAD BEEN AN EARLIER VISIT TO the States, for three weeks during January/February 1971. There to promote *The Man Who Sold The World*, Bowie, a keen student of all things American, soaked everything up – the crass commercialism, the whiff of danger, the neon-lit urgency of everything. He saw the Lou Reed-less Velvet Underground in New York and heard his first Stooges record in San Francisco. He also witnessed the transformation of Alice Cooper from underground duds into all-American shock-rockers thanks to some B-movie theatrics and a chart-bound teen anthem called I'm Eighteen.

Bowie returned home with a few Legendary Stardust Cowboy 45s and at least two new songs of his own. Hang On To Yourself was inspired by the Velvets' pacy set opener, We're Gonna Have A Real Good Time Together. Moonage Daydream was a slightly wooden piano-style rocker saved by an oddly strangulated vocal.

Neither were considered fit for *Hunky Dory*. That's because Bowie had a better idea. While in the States, he'd told *Rolling Stone* writer John Mendelsohn of his ambition to lampoon the pop business with what he called 'Pantomime Rock'. He was arguing for a new aesthetic along the lines of that outlined in Susan Sontag's essay Notes On 'Camp', where sincerity is not enough; worse still, it is unmasked as "simple philistinism, intellectual narrowness".

A week after his return, Bowie demoed both songs



"Have you heard this one?": Bowie entertains in LA, January 1971; (below) turning red, Haddon Hall, Beckenham, 1972.

with local pick-up band Rungk, giving the project a suitably corny name: Arnold Corns. Considering Bowie's recent piano compositions, and given his admiration for Andy Warhol's mentoring ways, Arnold Corns was a convenient vehicle to test-drive a new musical initiative while at the same time flex his latent impresario muscles. Bowie even found a star face to front the project, clothes designer Freddie Burretti, alias 'Rudi Valentino'. Bowie predicted he'd become a Mick Jagger for the 1970s.

Famously, Freddie couldn't sing a note. Besides, Bowie was far more excited by his new backing band. After a second Corns session in June, with Bowie's band now providing the backing, he dropped the project. But he'd not forget the songs. During an intense week of *Ziggy* sessions between November 8-15, Bowie resurrected both. He no longer felt any need to maintain a distance from this more avowedly rock material, nor remain anonymous behind an alter-ego. For this new project, David Bowie would present Ziggy Stardust And The Spiders From Mars.

The night before the first session, Bowie took the band to see Alice Cooper at the Rainbow. He was appalled by the vaudevillian spectacle and walked out before the end. Bowie had big ideas for the Ziggy project and threw everything at it, from his love of Edith Piaf and Judy Garland (he wanted to be "an entertainer in the old-fashioned sense of the word," he'd told Johnson back in August) to his desire to create something as impactful on rock as *Sgt. Pepper* or *Tommy*. He knew the timing was right, that his ever-growing entourage believed in his talent and above all that his material would stick.

While it's been said that Bowie was kicking the germ of the Ziggy idea around the States in February 1971, the project unfolded piecemeal. The truth is that Bowie recorded much of the album with his long, blond Veronica Lake locks intact; that the album was still being called *Round And Round* weeks after the main sessions had finished; that such a quintessentially Ziggy-style song Sweet Head never made the final cut; and that three of the album's key titles – Starman, Suffragette City and grand finale Rock'n'Roll Suicide – were recorded almost as an afterthought.

With *Ziggy Stardust*, David Bowie realised his ambition to create a rock'n'roll musical of sorts. The man who'd described himself as 'The Actor' on the *Hunky Dory* sleeve also saw the venture as a way of unifying his shadow career as a mime, an aspiring writer of musicals, even to reconcile his pet subject – the divided self. He also likely intended to leave the mask on-stage at the end of each performance. It didn't quite work out like that.

THE PREQUEL

AN EARLIER BOWIE INVENTION CONJURES SHADES OF ZIGGY, REPORTS MARTIN ASTON.

ERNIE JOHNSON: an earthbound name if ever there was. Yet the musical that David Bowie demoed in 1968 is the most tantalising of his remaining buried treasures, and suggests early stirrings of Ziggy Stardust.

Ernie Johnson came to light in Bowie manager Ken Pitt's memoir The Pitt Report, published in 1985, but only when the internet spread news of a tape bearing eight (some reports say 10) songs being auctioned at Christie's in 1996 did the story truly emerge, as Pitt writes, of "Ernie's suicide party, described by Tiny Tim, one of the guests, as a 'Most exquisite party, darlings. Everyone was there. They busted me for masquerading as a man. How *dare* they?'"

The minutiae of the plot – including a conversation (unfortunately un-PC) with a tramp and a trip to Carnaby Street to buy a tie – is by-the-by; it's the references to ambisexuality, masquerade and self-destruction, unified by a stage concept, that Bowie kept in his locker for future recycling. And like the *Ziggy Stardust* album, Ernie Johnson lacked a cohesive plot. It seems that the suicide never even takes place. In other words, we're left guessing.

Fortuitously, Ernie never made the grade. One sample lyric – "Knock-knock/Who's there?/Three dollies more/I've caught me stocking in yer door" – makes it sound like a half-baked slice of Anthony Newley-esque farce. But Space Oddity was coming over the horizon and, with it, Bowie's eyes were raised from terrestrial realism to extra-terrestrial fantasy and, ultimately, Ziggy Stardust: a less earthbound name if ever there was.

THE PRODUCER

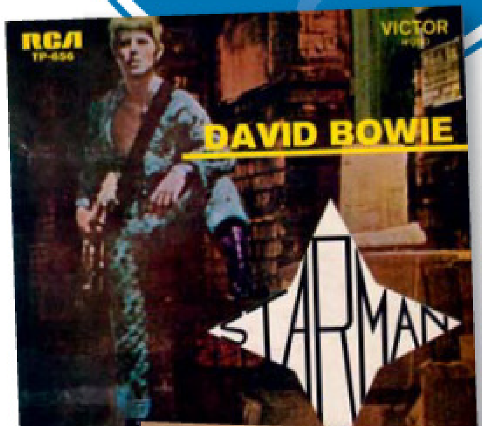
“IT’S GOING TO BE MORE ROCK’N’ROLL”

BACK INTO THE STUDIO IN LATE ’71, BOWIE HAD SURPRISES FOR EVERYONE – INCLUDING HIS LONGTIME ENGINEER, NOW PRODUCER. “I DON’T KNOW IF ANY OF US KNEW WHAT WE’D GOT,” REMEMBERS **KEN SCOTT**.

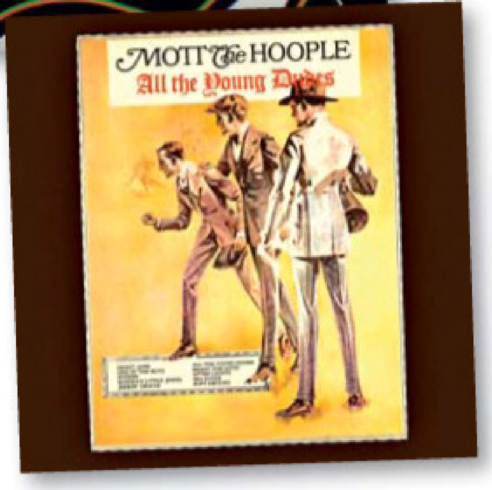
I LEFT EMI STUDIOS IN 1969 TO JOIN TRIDENT Studios [in Soho] as an in-house engineer. There was me, Robin Cable and Roy Thomas Baker. We each had our niche. Robin did orchestral stuff, like the early Elton John albums, Roy got the more obscure, heavier type of things and I was right in the middle. We didn’t have any say in which projects we were on. Some people might ask for you, like George Harrison asking for me to engineer *All Things Must Pass*. But with Bowie’s *Space Oddity* album I was assigned some of the sessions and that was it. When it came to *The Man Who Sold The World* I think I was requested.

“THE ASSISTANT ENGINEER ASKED ME, DID I THINK DAVID WOULD TRY AND GET OFF WITH ME?”

At the time I thought Bowie was a really nice guy, a good singer, with a certain amount of talent. But to me, in hindsight, those two albums, *Space Oddity* and *The Man Who Sold The World*, weren’t him. He wrote the songs and sang them, but the rest was a controlling producer. The only thing that happened from those records was the Space Oddity single, which he did with Gus Dudgeon, who was the kind of producer who allowed the artist to have their freedom. Apart from that single, Tony Visconti had control and those records were flops. Then Tony went off [with T. Rex] and David, for himself as much as anything, needed to know what he was hearing in his head worked.



LOU REED-TRANSFORMER



One of the great things about David was his ability to pick the right team to put across what he wanted. The team at that point – Trevor, Woody, Ronno, me behind the board and himself – was perfect for his ideas. We finished *Hunky Dory*, loved it, moved on. Two weeks later, I saw him in the corridor at Trident and he said, “We’re going to do another album.” I thought he was crazy. But he’d promised two in a row so [management company] GEM could get a better record deal. People did an album every six months then. The cream really rose to the top under those conditions. To keep that momentum going you had to be fucking great.

He talked about the next record and said, “You’re not gonna like it. It’s going to be more rock’n’roll.” But he was wrong, I did like it. I’d recorded The Beatles’ Helter Skelter – hard to get more rock’n’roll than that! And we’d already done Queen Bitch on *Hunky Dory*.

TO MAKE *ZIGGY* MORE rock’n’roll we started with a slight change in the drum sound. Woody thought the drums on *Hunky Dory* sounded like Corn Flakes packets. So on the opening day of *Ziggy* we set up a drum kit made up of different sized Corn Flakes packets. Just to amuse him. David didn’t discuss the concept because there wasn’t one. There are perhaps three songs that go together. The song that plays most into the concept idea is Starman, which came later.

When it was time to sing he wouldn’t discuss in advance what he was going to do. We’d test the track for level and then he’d go in and sing the whole thing. And whatever he did is what you hear today. Ninety-five per cent of the vocals, on the albums I did, were first takes. The vocal on Five Years, which is a great prologue song, he was bawling his eyes out at the end. Rock’n’Roll Suicide was one of the only ones we had to record in sections because the first part is very close-up and present and then, in the second half, he’s belting. They came from his soul and that’s why they’re still amazing vocals today, because they’re genuine.

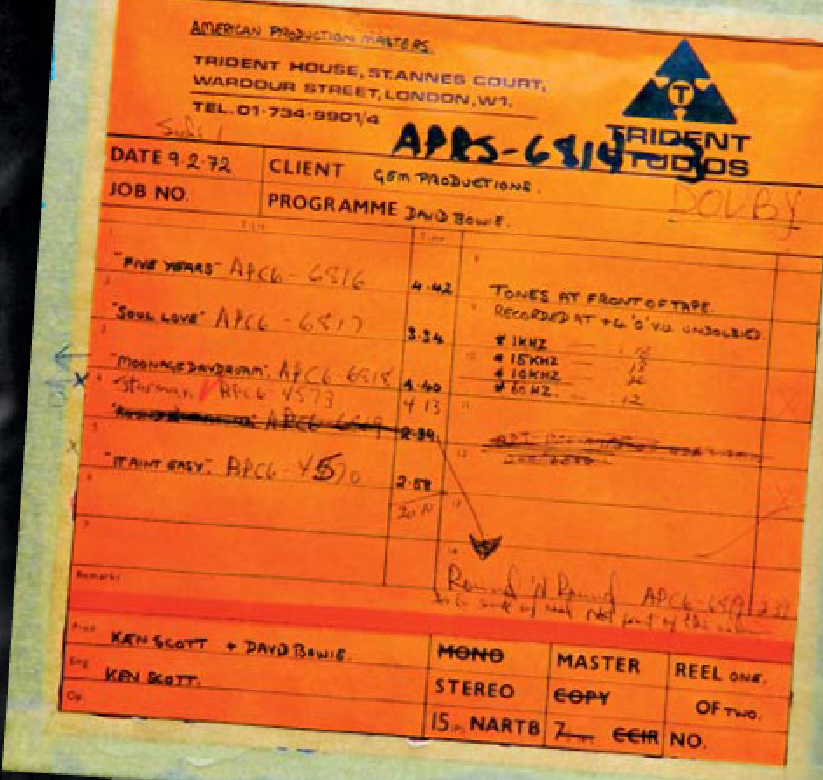
There was definitely a darker side to him which came through on songs like Five Years and Bombers and others later. But it didn’t come out in the room. On all four albums we did, he was always very up and we had a lot of fun, I never saw him down. But he bored easily. Woody and Trevor were always on the edge of their seat, because they knew if they didn’t get it quickly he’d say, “It isn’t working, let’s move on.” He didn’t even come to any of the mixes.

Once we thought we were done, word came back that RCA thought there wasn’t a single. So we went back in and did Starman in two days. The ‘I’m Gay’ interview [‘Oh You Pretty Things’, Melody Maker, January 22, 1972] had just come out. I remember mixing something, might have been Starman, and the assistant engineer asking me if I felt uncomfortable around him. Did I think David would try and get off with me? I laughed and said, “No! Not in the slightest.” It was just brilliant publicity.

When we finished I don’t know if any of us knew what we’d got. I didn’t realise until it came out. My sister-in-law was about to give birth in Bournemouth. I took my wife to see her, dropped her off at the hospital and went to park the car somewhere. I’m walking back to the hospital and coming out of someone’s open window was blasting Suffragette City. I thought,

“There was definitely a darker side to him…”: (clockwise from main pic) He played it left hand – shooting the *Ziggy* cover, Heddon Street, London, January 13, 1972; Trident Studios tape box; having a cuppa in the office; “Ziggy had to be alien” – with manager Tony Defries.

Courtesy MainMan Archives (2), Barrie Wentzell



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TEL. 01·734·9901/4

TRIDENT STUDIOS

APRS-6814

DATE 9.2.72 CLIENT GEM PRODUCTIONS.
JOB NO. PROGRAMME DAVID BOWIE.

DOLBY

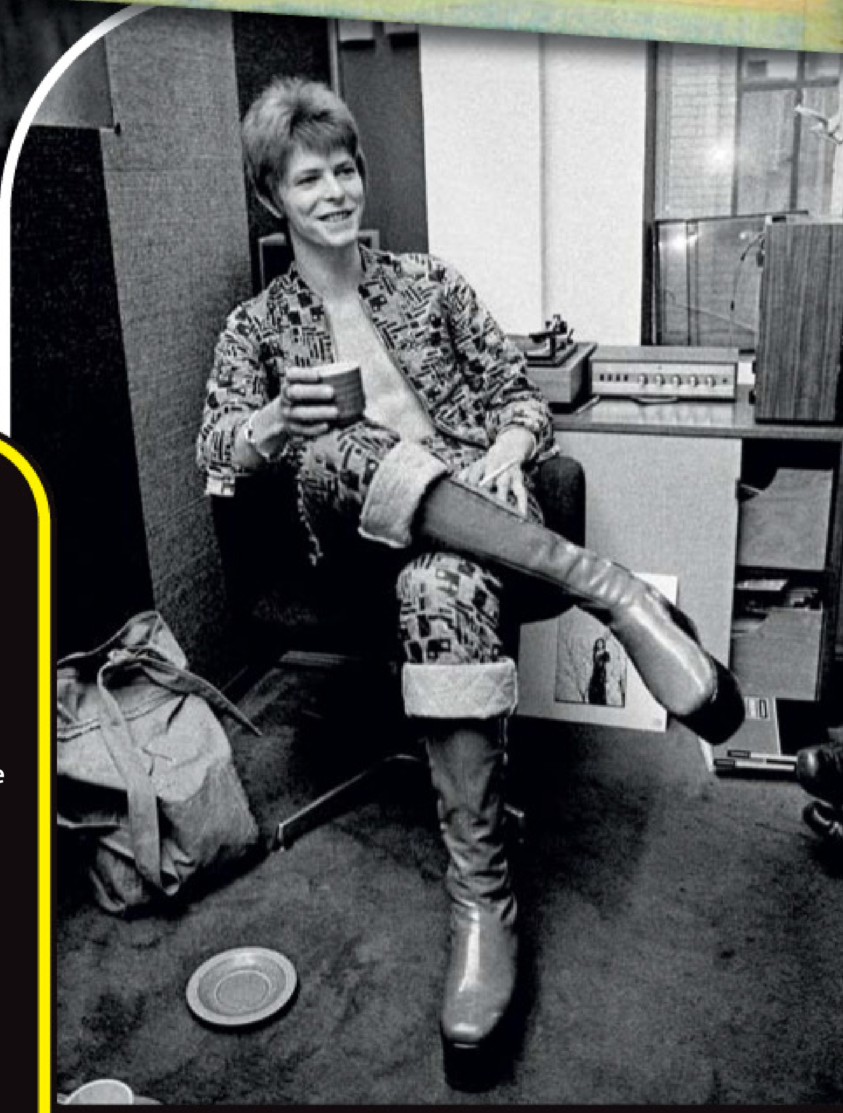
"FIVE YEARS" APC6-6816 4.42
"SOUL LOVE" APC6-6817 3.34
"MOONAGE DAYDREAM" APC6 6818 4.40
Starman APC6 4573 4 13
~~APC6-6819~~ 2.34
"IT AIN'T EASY" APC6-4570 2.58

TONES AT FRONT OF TAPE.
RECORDED AT +4 'O' VU. UNDOLBIED.
1KHZ .12
15KHZ .12
10KHZ .12
60HZ .12

Round 'n Round APC6-6819

KEN SCOTT + DAVID BOWIE.
KEN SCOTT.

~~MONO~~ STEREO 15 in NARTB
MASTER ~~COPY~~ ~~7 in~~ ~~CCIR~~
REEL ONE OF TWO. NO.



"Fuck me, that's great." Then I was sitting in reception at Trident reading a paper and Gus Dudgeon walked in and said, "Congratulations Ken!" and I said, "On what?" Starman had entered the charts.

SO WHEN IT WAS TIME TO record *Aladdin Sane*, David was a star. We started it in New York. He loved the atmosphere over there, but most of it ended up at Trident. Also, in between those albums he'd produced [Lou Reed's] *Transformer* and [Mott The Hoople's] *All The Young Dudes*. So his confidence was building. He was certainly more sure of himself, which could at times come out as ego. He was a little more arrogant.

My recollection is that the drugs didn't start 'til after *Aladdin Sane*. The cocaine habit pushed the ego even further, as it tends to do. That's got to play with your head. It's always difficult dealing with stardom. *Pin-Ups* and *Diamond Dogs* were kind of weird, and there was a long period when we weren't in touch and that was mostly legal, because of non-payment of royalties. But one day I came home and my answer phone was flashing, and it was David and we started to make more contact again.

I'd always e-mail him on his birthday, to remind him that he was four months older than me. And he would always respond very quickly. Until the last time when I sent the e-mail and didn't hear back from him. Then, next day, the phone goes early in the morning and it was a friend of ours who worked for a radio station: "Would Ken be interested in doing an interview?" And my wife said, "It's six in the morning, what do you mean would he be interested?" and she said, "Oh, so you haven't heard?" And that was how we found out he had died.

After *Aladdin Sane*, we were going out to dinner one night and David got down on one knee and gave me a gold bracelet inscribed "KT – the lightning strike – DB". I've worn it almost every day since.

As told to Jim Irvin

THE STRATEGY

MANAGER TONY DEFRIES ON TURNING BOWIE INTO "THE NEXT PRESLEY".

PART OF THE problem with David was he wasn't a natural performer. What I wanted to do with David was take somebody who was essentially shy, nervous, not self-confident, but capable of being wrapped up in a character that would be all those things. Ziggy had to be self-confident, strange, unusual, different, alien and very talented. If you could believe all that, then you could believe that David was going to be the next Presley.

I'd said, "David, think about getting the best musicians that you can get at any point in time. Not the best individually, but the ones that work best together. Because that's what you need. Don't tie yourself to a bunch of musicians that may not grow with you." Essentially, that message meant David was sort of free to not have to think about the band. But he didn't really get the message, frankly, until we retired Ziggy. Because then he realised, "I can't keep doing Ziggy forever. I can't go on-stage and do this another 1,000 times. I need to do something else." But you can't do something else unless you step away from that and you look at what's next.

As told to Tom Doyle

THE CHIEF-OF-STAFF

"I'D BE GOING, 'MAKE IT MORE LIBERACE!'"

ANGIE BOWIE WAS THE POWER BEHIND ZIGGY'S GLITTER THRONE. **BOB MEHR** CATCHES UP WITH THE STILL-DEFIANT 72-YEAR-OLD FOR A SUPER-RARE INTERVIEW.

THERE IS NO MISTAKING ANGIE BOWIE – certainly not among the otherwise elderly vacationers milling about the lobby of the historic Arizona Inn.

Even at the age of 72, she would seem an outsized character anywhere, but particularly in the semi-sleepy desert town of Tucson, where she's chiefly resided since the mid-'90s, along with her partner of three decades, Michael Gassett.

As her booming raspy voice fills the Inn's elegant library lounge – with tales of her 12-year relationship with David Bowie, and plenty of sex, drugs and rock'n'roll – occasionally a passing hotel guest will pop their head in and eavesdrop, their jaws soon agape.

"Am I being too loud?" she asks at one point. "When I start discussing this stuff, it's like I'm talking about another world. Some of it just beggars belief."

Born and raised in Cyprus, the child of an American Army colonel ("He was a natural strategist – that's where I get it from") and a stylish Canadian mother, Mary Angela Barnett would seem an unlikely midwife for a pop revolution. But one could argue the seeds of Ziggy Stardust were sown during her childhood.

"My thrill and fascination and love for sparkle and glitz came from Liberace," says Angie, who encountered the flamboyant pianist on an ocean liner as a child. "My mother talked him into coming to our state room. Liberace was an angel – he came and gathered me up in his arms. He smelled of perfume and hairspray, just coiffed beautifully, tailored fantastically. I knew then how a man, how a star, should be."

Although brought up a strict Catholic, at 18 Angie went to college in America and promptly began an affair with a woman. After the romance soured, she fled school and headed to the UK, where she was accepted at Kingston Polytechnic to study marketing and economics. Here, too, she began working for Mercury Records under its American boss Lou Reisner and his head of A&R, Dr Calvin Mark Lee (a fellow bisexual, whom she also dated). Working with artists including Buddy Miles, Angie would go to bat for a young David Bowie, whom Reisner was lukewarm on signing.

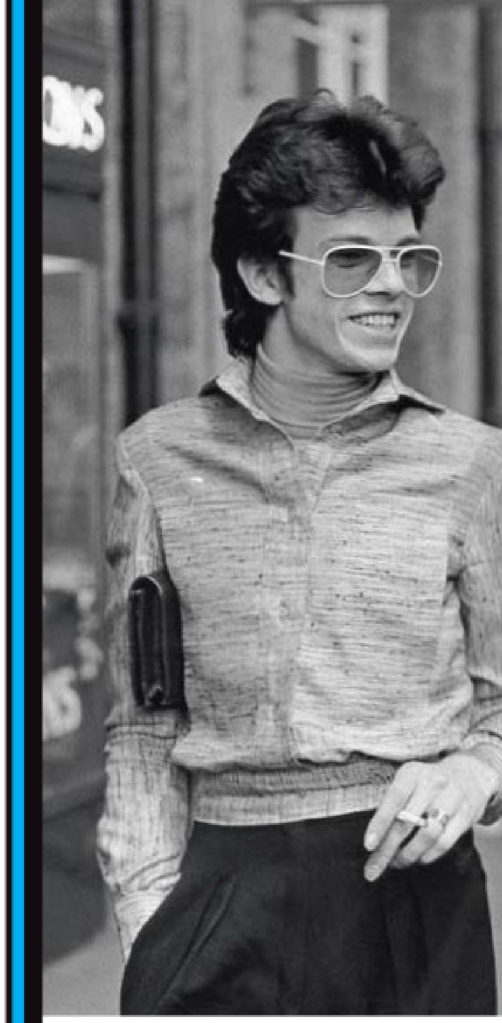
"They only wanted to give him a deal for a single. I said, 'Why? For a couple thousand dollars more you could get an LP and all the publishing,'" says Angie, who first saw Bowie at the Roundhouse with his folk rock group Feathers in 1968. "I said a few encouraging things to him… then later on, he got the flu and asked me to come down to Beckenham to look after him. That's when he played me all the songs he had. When he played me everything, I was impressed… I spent the night with him."

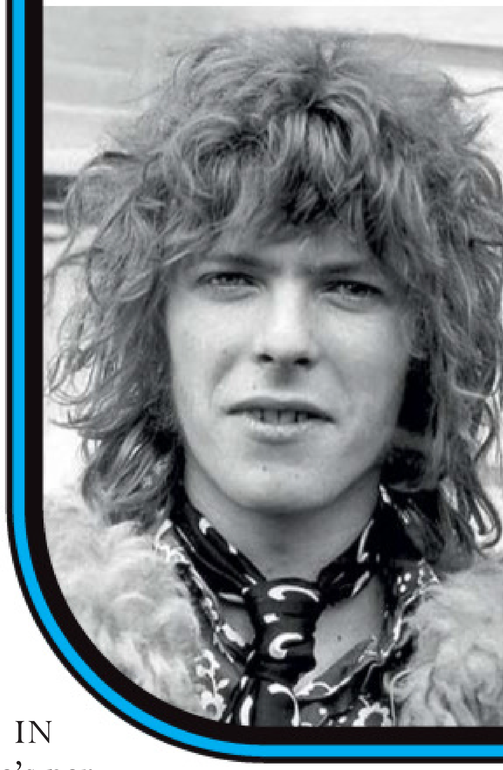
Space Oddity's freak success in 1969 promised more of the same, but it was hard for Angie not to notice flaws in the singer's career strategy.

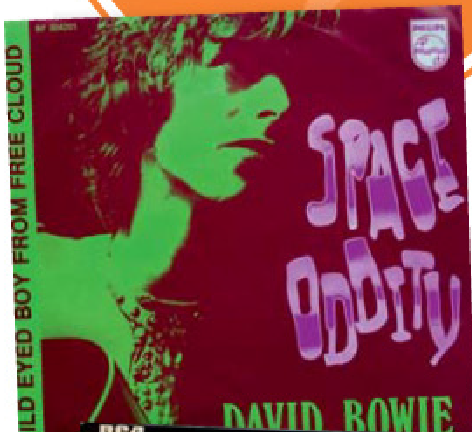
"Ken Pitt used to book him into these ridiculous working men's clubs, where if you had long hair and looked swishy they'd boo you off stage," she says. "After about three months of this, I said to David, 'I don't know about you, but I'm getting fed up with this.'"

Meanwhile, Angie says she was pushing Bowie into writing more challenging material. "I wanted him to be brave. I wanted him to talk about the things that most other people thought you should sweep under the rug, which is how English people are."

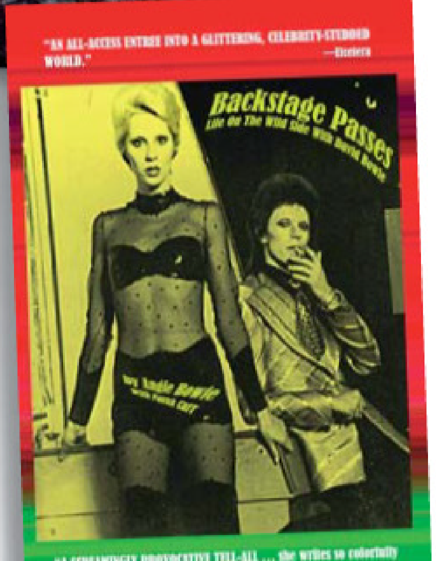
"I WANTED DAVID TO LOOK LIKE A STAR ALL THE TIME – TO BE DRESSED RIGHT, ALWAYS MAINTAINING THE ILLUSION."







RCA
VICTOR
DAVID BOWIE
HUNKY DORY


"AN ALL-ACCESS ENTRÉE INTO A GLITTERING, CELEBRITY-STUDDED WORLD."
Backstage Passes
Life on The Wild Side with David Bowie
by Angie Bowie
with Patrick Carr

THE COUPLE WED IN March 1970 and Bowie's personal stability and growing confidence would be reflected in *Hunky Dory*. "That album was cute and fabulous," says Angie. "That was us being together, having a kid."

Their son, Duncan Zowie Haywood Jones, was born in May 1971. But even the familial arrangement came with one eye on Bowie's career. "He had to basically present as heterosexual with bisexual tendencies to get by the American censors," says Angie. "I figured if he had a child they're not going to argue that he's hetero. And David had such a good relationship with his father, I could tell he was going to have a great relationship with Zowie."

As a new Bowie album took shape, Angie worked on the visuals with Freddie Burretti, who'd worked as a tailor before figuring in Bowie's plans for the Arnold Corns.

"Freddie was a rent boy," says Angie. "And David fell in love with him. He was playing the classic French drama queen Camille who can't get a hold of the person they love. I said, 'Not a problem. Let's bring him down and install him in Haddon Hall and we'll get plenty of suits made.'"

Soon Bowie's look was getting more outrageous by the day.

"I'd be going, 'No, Freddie – *more*! Make it more Liberace!' Freddie and [Russian designer] Natasha Korniloff would be making these fabulous outfits for the stage, but it was the in-between that was important to me. I wanted him to look like a star all the time – to be dressed right, always maintaining the illusion, always promoting."

All that glitters…: (clockwise from above left) with clothes designer Freddie Burretti; "I tried to boost him" – Angie and David in 1974; getting hitched at Bromley Register Office, March 19, 1970.

By the time the *Ziggy* LP emerged, Angie was serving as Bowie's "interpreter, negotiator and head mistress". "Sometimes I'd push him," she says. "Sometimes I'd have to back away. But that's managing – and I guess I was managing him." At the top of their agenda was America: "If you don't want to conquer the world, don't waste my fucking time."

While she insists that neither of them was ever in love with the other, Angie supported Bowie through Ziggy and beyond, though the success of the project was part of what prised them apart. "At a certain point the applause starts to make them think they're something more than they really are," she says. "And it's like, no, you're not God."

Specifically, she felt Bowie had reneged on their personal agreement: "I had done a deal with David that first we would work on his career, and then we would work on mine." Angie would go on to audition for the role of Wonder Woman on American television in the mid-'70s, but even while semi-detached, she would continue to field calls from her husband. "I was his trouble-shooter… I started to get really fed up with it. Disengaging was very difficult."

After a decade of marriage, the couple officially divorced in 1980; Angie ended up with a $750,000 settlement and the Bowie name. A year later she would release a memoir, Free Spirit, but it would take another dozen years – and the death of her father ("I would never want to embarrass him while he was alive") – before she published her eye-opening account, Backstage Passes: Life On The Wild Side With David Bowie. She has continued to write, penning a fascinating 2014 cultural history called POP.SEX.

Fifty years on from the Ziggy Stardust phenomenon, Angie believes her role in helping shape one of pop's most fascinating chapters is finally being recognised.

"That's the response I get now on social media – people are giving me my credit," she says. "Never in anything I've ever written have I tried to take credit for something David did – I didn't write his songs; I didn't go on stage and perform. But I talked him into writing what I thought would be much more important and relevant. I had a big hand in how things looked. And I tried to boost him. When we got together, I promised David I'd make him known worldwide. And I succeeded."

Alamy (2)

THE HAIRCUT

A RUG RETHINK THAT SAID GOODBYE TO THE '60s, RECOUNTED BY BILL DEMAIN.

"AS A STYLIST, you look at a face, and David's was beautiful," said Suzi Ronson. "Long slim neck, alabaster skin, perfect for short red hair."

In January 1972, Ronson (then Suzanne Fussey) was a 21-year-old stylist at Evelyn Paget salon on Beckenham High Street, where one of her regulars was Peggy Jones, David Bowie's mother. Through Peggy, Ronson met Bowie's wife Angie, and was invited to Haddon Hall to give Bowie a tonsorial makeover.

The couple showed Ronson inspiration photos from Vogue, including one of model Christine Walton sporting a candy-red pixie – spiky front, comma sideburns.

"Can we do that?" Bowie asked.

Half an hour later, the do was done. At least the first part of it. The still-blondish Bowie was captured in Brian Ward's *Ziggy* cover photo on January 13. Meanwhile, Ronson experimented with colour on some of Bowie's trimmed locks. She settled on Schwarzkopf's Red Hot Red, "with 30 volume peroxide, to give it a bit of a kick." And for fixative, she chose Gard, "an anti-dandruff treatment I'd used on the old girls at the salon – it set hair like stone."

By the time Bowie started his UK tour at the end of the month, his hair was in full rooster glory. But it took some maintenance, which soon gave Ronson a ticket out of salon life and into Ziggy's touring circus. "I knew if I created something that needed touching up every two or three weeks, I was in. I wanted to be on the bus, not waving at it."

THE BAND

"WE NEEDED TO BE THE FUTURE OF ROCK'N'ROLL"

THE SPECIAL CHEMISTRY OF THE SPIDERS FROM MARS – BEFORE THE *OTHER* CHEMISTRY KICKED IN – BY THEIR DRUMMER, WOODY WOODMANSEY.

WHEN WE DID *HUNKY DORY*, WE WERE FINDING it very hard to imagine taking that on the road. Great songs and all that, but to turn it into a good rock show, it needed to be more exciting. And then it was like, OK, well, we have to rock it up a bit. This was the general consensus as we were chatting among ourselves: "This is a rock album we're going for." But not following the trends.

Mick, Trevor, and I, we'd been through very similar musical backgrounds. We'd gone through the blues. When I joined The Rats in Hull, they were still doing half a blues set, half a rock set, bit of progressive rock. We did a lot of Jeff Beck stuff. And we were all into, like, "If we're going to do it, you do it properly." Mick was fastidious about every note, it had to be perfect.

Bowie was continually writing. He was on a roll, you'd have to say. Everything that came out, it was like, "That's a good song." And it didn't have any bearing on the last three that he'd written. He'd seemed to get his direction together.

Iggy and the new, rebellious side of rock was just starting to emerge in America. The English playing tended to be more musical. So, when we heard that, and the Velvet Underground stuff they'd done earlier, it was like, "Holy shit, it's got a degenerate vibe about it. There's no holding back on this stuff. But we're not going to do it that way. It's got to be English." So, it was streamlining some of what they were doing into where it fitted in a Bowie song.

When we went back into Trident in November '71 it was the same approach, but there was a bit more discussion about tracks. There was still this edgy thing I think David liked, where he'd go, "Let's do Five Years. OK, Woody, you're starting this one." First thing I heard about it! Your first impulse is to do some tasty little bits, a few cymbal splashes. But we were very into, "What's the song about?" So, you knew what you were trying to communicate. And when I realised this was about the end of the world, I kind of played from that viewpoint and Bowie went, "You've got it. Just keep that feel, it's perfect."

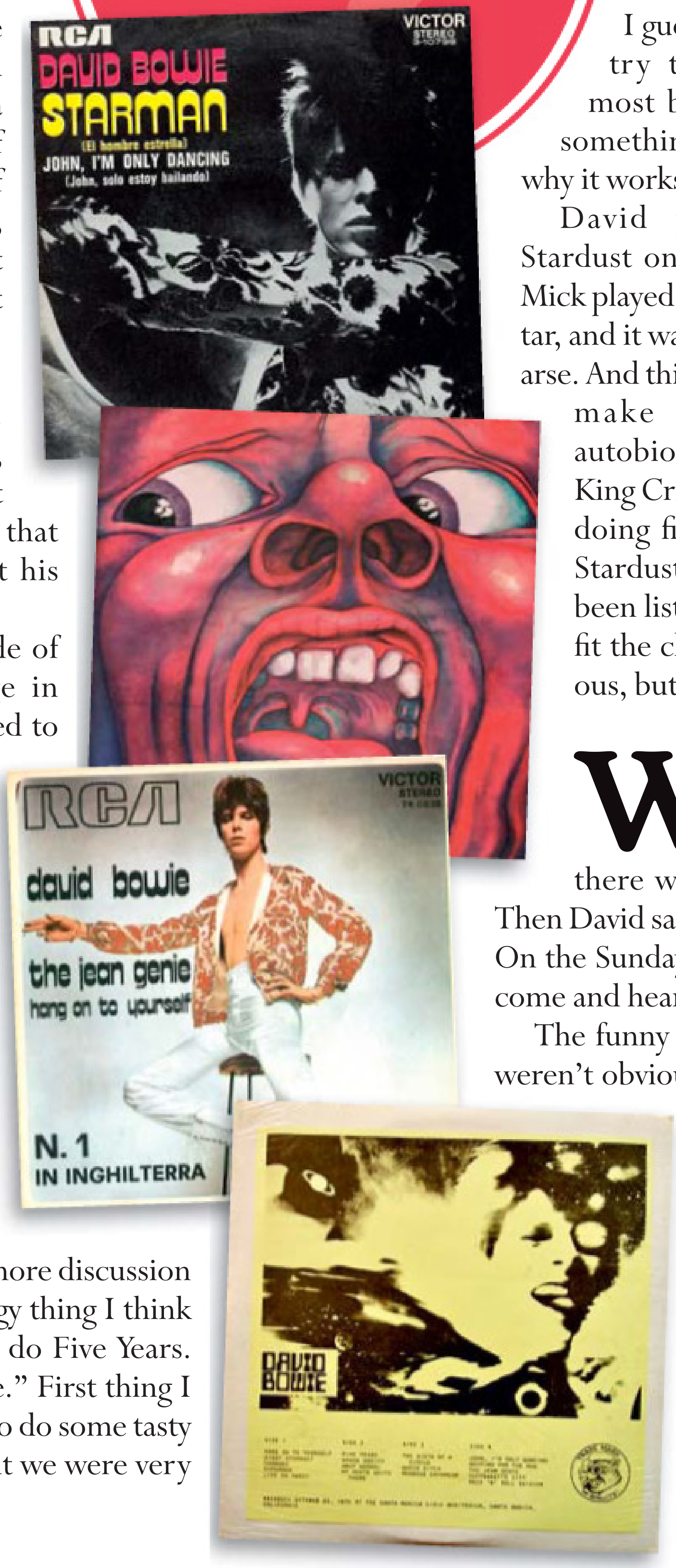
As a band we'd got into taking out anything that didn't add to the song. And then it was like, "Well, they're all spacey-oriented things, it's about an alien, blah de blah. So, we need to be the future of rock'n'roll. Where would rock'n'roll go?" So, you're thinking, "Well, it would go through electronic-y things, more technology involved. But then you'd still have this basic groove, that's what rock's all about."

Musically, we'd worked together as a three-piece, so it didn't take us much to get on the same page. A lot of times we didn't talk about a song, we just played. Trev played quite melodically, and Mick would go, "What are you playing there? Oh, I like that." Then he would work out his lead bit from the bass part. It just clicked.

I guess there's a chemistry that happens with most bands that have got something. You don't know why it works. It just works.

David played us Ziggy Stardust on 12-string and then Mick played along with him on guitar, and it was like, "OK, this is kick-arse. And this is about *us*. So, we have to make it good. It's like an autobiography in a track." Michael Giles from King Crimson was the first drummer I noticed who started doing fills that fitted in strange places. So, doing Ziggy Stardust, it was probably 21st Century Schizoid Man I'd been listening to a lot. And I went, "Ooh, actually, this will fit the chord sequence. I don't know if it's a bit adventurous, but I'll give it a go." I guess it became kind of a hook.

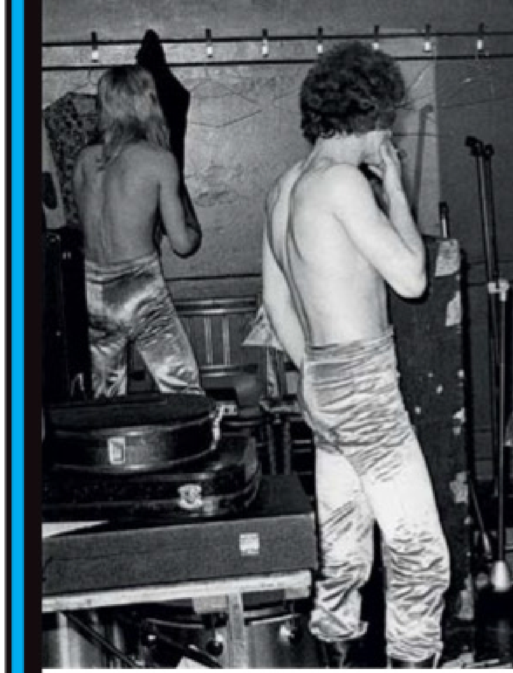
"WITH STARMAN WE THOUGHT, 'OH SHIT, HAVE WE GONE TOO POPPY?'"



WE FINISHED THE ALBUM, AND WE WERE high as a kite. It was like, "Wow, this is good, we've done a good job." When RCA said there wasn't a single it was like, "Fucking hell, really?" Then David said, "OK," and over the weekend he wrote Starman. On the Sunday, he just said, "Oh, I've finished it. D'you want to come and hear it?" We went, "Fucking hell, that's a hit."

The funny thing was, because the other tracks on the album weren't obvious singles, it stood out to us as like, "Oh shit, have we gone too poppy?" Mick and I were in a car going back to our place and I was going (*adopts exaggerated croon*), "Didn't know what time it was, the lights were low-OH-OH." We were like, "That's right on the edge, innit, between shit and brilliance?" But it was fucking amazing that he wrote that over the weekend, and it was perfect from beginning to end.

Later, recording The Jean Genie at RCA Studios in New York, I think we'd soaked up



TO STAGE
TO STREET
XIT

Eight legs good: Ziggy Stardust And The Spiders From Mars finding their feet (from left) Trevor Bolder, Woody Woodmansey, David Bowie, Mick Ronson; (left, top) backstage at Oxford Town Hall, June 17, 1972; at the Rainbow Theatre, Finsbury Park, August 1972.

being in America. There were more rock stations there, so you got more on the American rock vibe. Live, tracks that we'd done quieter on *Hunky Dory*, we just played 'em fucking heavy. You're playing bigger stadiums and I guess instinctively you get more into playing heavier. That was where our hearts were anyway – playing as loud as you can fucking get it, where they can still take it. We don't want bleeding ears, but, y'know… close.

Santa Monica [Civic Auditorium, October 20, 1972] was an awesome gig. For whatever reason, it just really clicked. Bowie's mike [stand] kept slipping and he took a pair of pliers off the roadie and fixed it. It was Ziggy with a pair of pliers! The audience all cheered. A lot of those American audiences, they were just gobsmacked. Their mouths were open, and we could see it from the stage.

Bowie's changes in behaviour, and [our lack of] ability to communicate with him, was an oddity that we didn't really put down to drugs. Sometimes he would come to soundcheck, just sing one bit of the one song, and then fuck off. Whereas before we'd have had a good run through things and a good laugh, as a gang. That changed the atmosphere.

The two Hammersmith Odeon gigs [July 2-3, 1973] were great shows. It was great to land back in London after we'd done America, then Japan, and then back to England. It was a tour that felt like each night was a peak. But we'd sort of got used to [the fact that] he would do things on the spur of the moment that sometimes were kind of shock tactics. So, when he announced that [it was "the last show that we'll ever do"], I thought it was just one of those. It took a couple of days really to find out it's really the Ziggy thing he's ending.

If The Spiders had stayed together, the three of us? Good question. *Pin-Ups* would definitely have been better. We'd done demos of Rock'n'Roll With Me and 1984, off *Diamond Dogs*. They were sounding really fucking good. I guess what he didn't know, and we never brought it up, was that we all came through the soul thing as well. You learnt all that as part of your apprenticeship. But because we didn't play like that any more, he probably didn't think we could. We never went, "Well, we can do that too." 'Cos it had passed by that point. But I reckon we could've handled a lot of it.

As told to Tom Doyle

THE ROADIE

CIGARETTES AND TAMBOURINES: INSIDE THE SPIDERS BY PETER HINCE.

IT WAS 1973, I was 18 and my cousin, Mick, was looking after Woody Woodmansey's drums on the Ziggy Stardust tour. Mick also painted the Ziggy flashes for the backdrops at Hammersmith. I was at Mick's house when the head of the crew, Robin Mayhew, asked if I'd help out, mostly taking care of Mick Ronson's gear.

David was always a little aloof, he didn't hang out, but he trusted the people around him. Unlike Freddie Mercury, whom I worked with later, I never saw him throw a tantrum. Ronno was the most down-to-earth guy and he and David were closer than the others. Both of them chain-smoked too. I think David smoked Gitanes and Ronno smoked something like 80 Dunhill a day. Ronno was central to the Ziggy sound, the performance, all of it. Woody was like Charlie Watts – always solid, always there – and Trevor Bolder's bass playing was fantastic but he wasn't always the easiest person.

I remember being at the Grosvenor House hotel and Tony Defries had hired a suite. Four roadies carried in a video player the size of a small bungalow into the room and everyone watched the gig from the night before. They wanted to see what worked and what could be made better.

After the tour, Robin bought the equipment from Defries and formed a hire company called Ground Control. It was an unwritten rule that Ground Control helped out David, which is how I ended up at Olympic when he was recording *Diamond Dogs*. I had to deliver a tambourine to David and I remember watching him sat in the control room banging this tambourine on an acoustic guitar trying to get a sound for the album. I was still young enough and enough of a fan for the whole thing to feel like one big adventure.

As told to Mark Blake

Mick Rock, © Sukita

THE UNVEILING

"THE WORLD WAS HIS FOR THE TAKING"

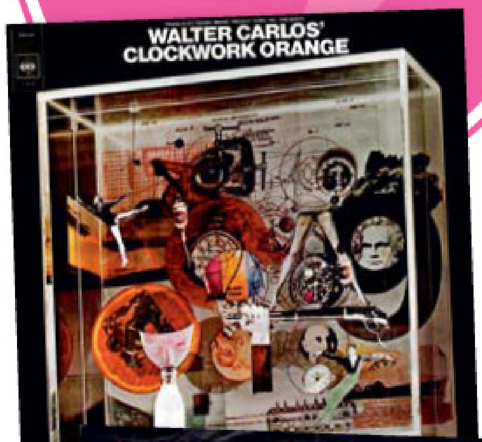
WHEN BOWIE'S UK TOUR BEGAN IN JANUARY '72, ZIGGY WAS BARELY FORMED. BY SEPTEMBER, IT WAS ZIGGYMANIA, REMEMBERS **KRIS NEEDS**.

JANUARY 29, 1972, FRIARS AYLESBURY: THE BUZZ gripping our local club suggests something magical is about to happen. We know, because David Bowie himself had promised it the previous September. Back then, in a half-full hall the shy singer-songwriter with the long blond tresses had started his set a nervous one-hit wonder and ended it in euphoric triumph, fronting the yet-to-be-dubbed Spiders From Mars. From my vantage point behind Mick Ronson's amp, I could see the elated relief light up his face.

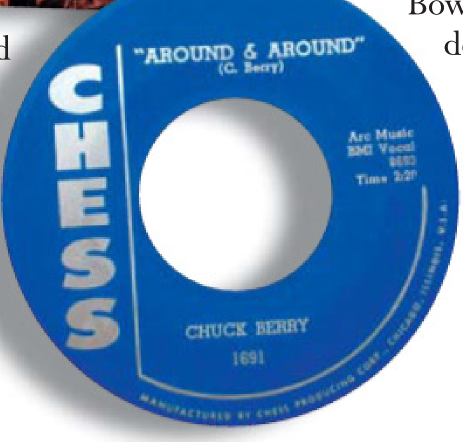
In the dressing room afterwards, Bowie told the 17-year-old me, "That was great. I want to come and play here again but next time it'll be very different. I think I'm going to be a huge rock star."

He wasn't wrong. Four months later in front of a feverish capacity crowd, the lights dimmed and Walter Carlos's Ode To Joy from A Clockwork Orange filled the old Borough Assembly Hall: ethereal, futuristic and building to a massive climax accompanied by blinding strobes. The band, all sporting jumpsuits, took their spots and kicked into Hang On To Yourself, to be joined by a Bowie transformed – hair shorn into a red spike-top, strutting in his diamond pattern one-piece and red wrestling boots.

"FIXING ME WITH A TRIUMPHANT SMILE, BOWIE SIMPLY CROWED, 'I TOLD YA!'"



I FEEL FREE
N.S.U.
Cream



The first set by the band mixed *Hunky Dory* material with as-yet-unheard *Ziggy Stardust* tracks, including Five Years (opening line inspired by Aylesbury Market Square outside). An extended version of Cream's I Feel Free gave Mick Ronson the chance to shine and Bowie to change into shiny white satin, further stoking the liberated bedlam on a cacophonous home stretch of Chuck Berry's Around & Around, Lou Reed's I'm Waiting For The Man and Rock'n'Roll Suicide's dramatic torch song finale. Some local girls timidly responded to Bowie's plea to give him their hands, although not enough to sustain Iggy-style crowd-surfing. Most of the crowd were too entranced, shocked or even scared by the androgynous alien who'd landed in our little club.

Afterwards, a grinning, almost post-coital Bowie held court in the cramped dressing room, surrounded by a gaggle of love-struck locals, exuding the swagger of someone who knew he'd cracked it. Fixing me with a triumphant smile, he simply crowed, "I told ya!" When my girlfriend asked why he wore make-up, he guffawed, "Well, I don't want to look like a dead bear!" The most vividly indelible gig of my young life was consummated with Bowie planting a great big kiss on my lips as I left. It was a kiss-off to the '60s. A come-on to the '70s and everything that came after, glam or punk.

THE NEXT SIX MONTHS were dominated by David Bowie as me and a small bunch of mutually-obsessed friends caught every Home Counties gig within driving distance. It was spellbinding watching Bowie adapt to his new skin until they became one and the same, his confidence growing with every show. The Spiders were coming into their own, injecting the new songs with raw power while enhancing their leader's every twirl, pout and hip-thrust, yet Bowie's startling new creation still took weeks to infiltrate, and some gigs were sparsely populated. A show at High Wycombe Town Hall on February 11 was about half full. At London's Imperial College the next night the crowd was so sparse they failed to keep Bowie aloft during Rock'n'Roll Suicide and he fell to the floor.

By then I was helping out with Bowie's Aylesbury-based fan club, designing its membership card, establishing a connection with Mainman management that branched out into a fan club for latest acquisitions Mott The Hoople. Visiting Tony Defries's offices for the first time I was given an advance copy of *The Rise And Fall Of Ziggy Stardust And The Spiders From Mars*.

By June, Bowie's star was rising every day while he honoured gigs booked months earlier. Sometimes he could barely believe how fast things were happening but always greeted his "boys and girls from Aylesbury".

Three gigs now stand out.

At Oxford Town Hall on Saturday, June 17 – the day after the *Ziggy* album's release – Bowie sported the red, blue and gold quilted number he'd wear on Top Of The Pops for his Starman performance the following month. I was feet away when Mick Rock snapped Bowie going down on Ronno's guitar during Suffragette City. The singer knew the shot's impact immediately – once developed, it was sent to fan club members as a signed postcard.

Dunstable's Queensway Hall, four days later, confirmed Bowie's breakthrough. Despite a near-cancellation after Bowie's unsmiling new bodyguard Stuey George accidentally set off the sprinkler system, the show at the 1,000-capacity venue was packed with space cadets sporting DIY variations on Ziggy's look. Bowie's most incendiary show yet climaxed with him ripping up his white satin shirt and throwing it to the baying crowd.

The night also marked the first and only time I sat alone in a room with Bowie. Lost backstage trying to

Rising starman: (clockwise from above) Bowie (with Mick Ronson) puts his best foot forward, London Poly, May 12, 1972; (top right) the "androgynous alien" lands in Aylesbury Friars, January 29, 1972; on TOTP with Ronson, July 6, 1972.

Mick Rock, Getty

find my lift home, I careered into a dressing room with bulbs around the mirrors, stumbling upon a lone figure on a plastic chair, sparkling legs crossed, each ending in multi-coloured platform brogues – Bowie, too, was awaiting his lift home. We talked about the show, the fan club and Mott The Hoople, whom he'd just saved with a killer new single, All The Young Dudes, recorded in May and to be released in July. Then, for one endless moment, his strange eyes looked into mine, probing and intense, before dropping with tiredness. "I guess nothing is ever going to be the same again," he sighed softly.

And it wasn't. When Bowie returned to Friars Aylesbury on July 15, Tony Defries had cut him off from press interviews and direct contact with fans. Knowing how a Friars show would guarantee adulation from a full house, our gig doubled as showcase for a planeload of American journalists flown in to start the buzz for Ziggy's US invasion, including Lillian Roxon, Lisa Robinson, Lenny Kaye and Dave Marsh. Bowie duly turned in a scorcher, adding Life On Mars?, performing with poise and confidence gained over the last six months with new devil-may-care energy and professionalism. This time, he knew the world was his for the taking.

Trying to reach the dressing rooms, my path was blocked by Stuey George, who hissed I would only get to see David over his dead body. It felt like being dumped – Bowie didn't belong to us any more. (He got smacked in the mouth getting into his car afterwards, blood everywhere.)

The following year, June 26, 1973, I'd sail past Stuey to visit David Bowie at Oxford's New Theatre after he phoned me at work on the local paper. His first question: "How are the boys and girls in Aylesbury?"

THE MYTH

WAS STARMAN'S TOTP DEBUT AS SEISMIC AS HAS BEEN CLAIMED? BOWIE EXPERT DAVID BUCKLEY DOUBTS IT.

THE BROADCAST of Starman on Top Of The Pops on July 6, 1972 has been heralded as a seismic moment in UK pop culture, or "four minutes that shook the world" as journo Dylan Jones put it in his 2012 book, When Ziggy Played Guitar. The reality, however, is a little different.

Released on April 28, the single initially made no impact on the charts whatsoever. It took eight weeks for its first appearance, charting at Number 49 (only a Top 50 was published back then) on June 24. The single had in fact been on heavy rotation in the UK courtesy of Johnnie Walker on Radio 1. Then, on June 15, Bowie and the Spiders recorded Starman for ITV kids' pop show, Lift Off With Ayshea, a performance broadcast on June 21. Those in the North-west's Granada region coming home from school may well have had their Starman epiphany then, as Fall guitarist and 6 Music DJ Marc Riley recalled: "I was absolutely gob-smacked. My gran was shouting insults at the TV and I just sat there agog."

Three weeks later, when Bowie popped up on Top Of The Pops, Ian McCulloch, later the star man in Echo & The Bunnymen, was likewise mesmerised: "All my mates at school would say, 'Did you see that bloke on Top Of The Pops? He's a right faggot, him!' And I remember thinking, You pillocks."

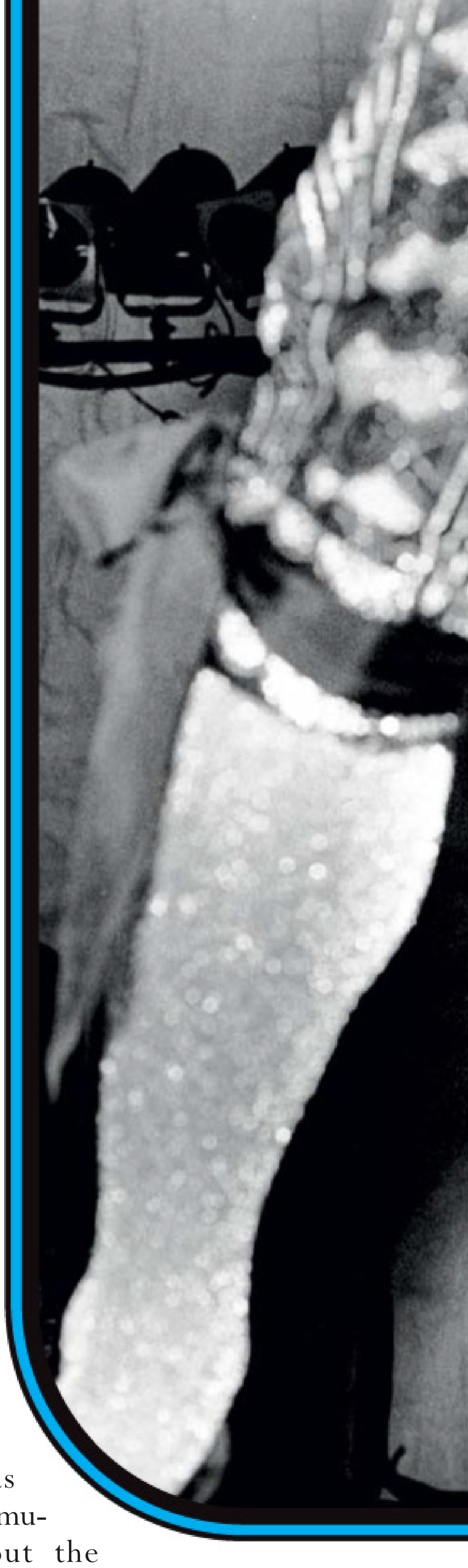
While not entirely rubbishing the supposed impact of the July 6 broadcast on a generation of future pop stars, it certainly does not appear to have transformed Bowie's fortunes overnight. Starman managed to climb from 29 to 20 the following week on its way to a peak of 10 in the UK charts (a re-showing of the performance on the TOTP of July 20 may have made more of a difference). While creditable, this was some distance from being a really big hit. For Bowie, those came later, starting with The Jean Genie (released in November '72 and topping out at Number 2 in the UK chart) and Drive-In Saturday (Number 3 in April 1973).

It is, in fact, the *third* broadcast of TOTP's Starman that we see on YouTube and clips shows today. This was December 27, 1973, at 5.45pm (after Tom And Jerry and before a showing of Chaplin's Modern Times) as part of Top Of The Pops: Ten Years Of Pop Music, 1964-74. The earlier Starman TOTPs of July 1972 appear to have been wiped.

Hosted by Jimmy Savile, Ten Years Of Pop Music is unlikely ever to be reshown, but this was undoubtedly when a really large audience saw the performance. By the end of 1973, Bowie was genuinely big, with the bombshell of his 'retirement' that summer leading to six of his albums being in the charts the following January. Crucially, more British viewers had by now bought, or more likely rented, a colour TV, a crucial factor in seeing Bowie and the Spiders in their full peacock glory. Thank goodness for Christmas repeats after all.

"I SEE HUNDREDS OF FANS STORMING THE STAGE"

MIKE GARSON WAS THE MAN ON THE 88s WHEN BOWIE'S TOUR REACHED AMERICA IN AUTUMN '72. HE TELLS MARK PAYTRESS WHAT HE SAW.



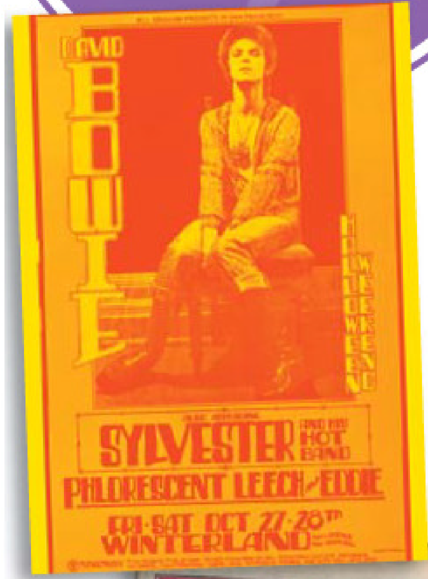
IN MANCHESTER OVER SEPTEMBER 2-3, 1972, FOR TWO shows at the newly opened Hardrock venue, Bowie's manager Tony Defries sat the entourage down for a pep talk before taking the Ziggy show to the States later that month.

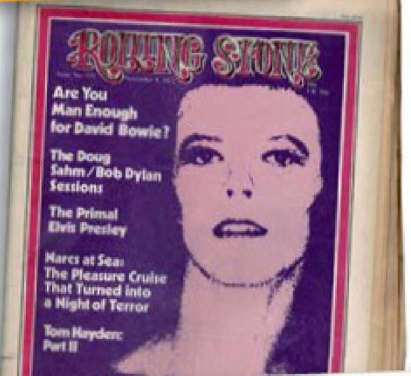
"So far as RCA in America is concerned," Defries said, "the man with the red hair at the end of the table is the biggest thing to have come out of England since The Beatles. You've all got to learn how to look and act like a million dollars."

By September 17, David and Angie Bowie were installed in the Plaza Hotel on Fifth Avenue. Bowie albums were piled high in record shops, local radio was primed for when the Ziggy show hit town, and RCA prepared to foot the bill for a vast travelling circus.

Mike Garson was a classically trained pianist whose preferred medium was jazz but had backed everyone from Mel Tormé to Martha And The Vandellas. Three days before the tour opened in Cleveland, Ohio, Garson was summoned to RCA's New York studio to audition for an act he'd barely heard of. He'd hardly got through the opening flourish of Changes before Mick Ronson gave him the nod.

> "BOWIE SHOWED ME FILMS OF ELVIS AND SINATRA. HE COULD DUPLICATE IT ALL, THE MOVES, THE PHRASING. IT WAS FRIGHTENING."




ROLLING STONE
Are You Man Enough for David Bowie?
The Doug Sahm/Bob Dylan Sessions
The Primal Elvis Presley
Narcs at Sea: The Pleasure Cruise That Turned into a Night of Terror
Tom Hayden: Part II

DAVID BOWIE
ALADDIN SANE

Garson, who'd previously gone out with Brethren on a Grand Funk Railroad tour, thought he knew what to expect from a rock gig. First night on the Bowie roadshow changed all that. "We finished the last piece and David and the Spiders took off through a back entrance at lightning speed. I'm gathering my music papers, and all of a sudden, I see hundreds of fans storming the stage. I had to get the hell out of there."

Ziggymania only came to selected cities. In St Louis less than a couple of hundred showed up. Even in San Francisco, gay capital of the world, the usually thriving Winterland did poor business.

"It was a little scary on that first American tour because he wasn't known," Garson says. "He was kept in a vacuum to try and create mystery, so it was a bit of a gamble. But the fans who did show up, who knew his music, were very much into him."

Sometimes, Garson got a glimpse of Bowie's private world. "He invited me up to his room and showed me filmed performances of Elvis Presley and Frank Sinatra. He could duplicate it all, the moves, the phrasing. It was frightening. He had the Midas touch. He had the ability to become anything."

The US critical establishment was divided. Some, like Lillian Roxon for the New York Daily News, reprised the "A Star Is Born" line peddled in Melody Maker earlier that summer. Others, like the otherwise favourable Robert Christgau for Newsday, questioned whether the nation's "jaded rock" audiences would ever appreciate songs about Andy Warhol written by a man they might regard as "some English fairy". Hype concerned critics too. "The Spiders were going to the store in the Beverly Hills Hotel and coming out with cameras and fur coats," says Garson. "I was ordering breakfasts for myself, my wife and my daughter, and the bill was $80. RCA paid for everything."

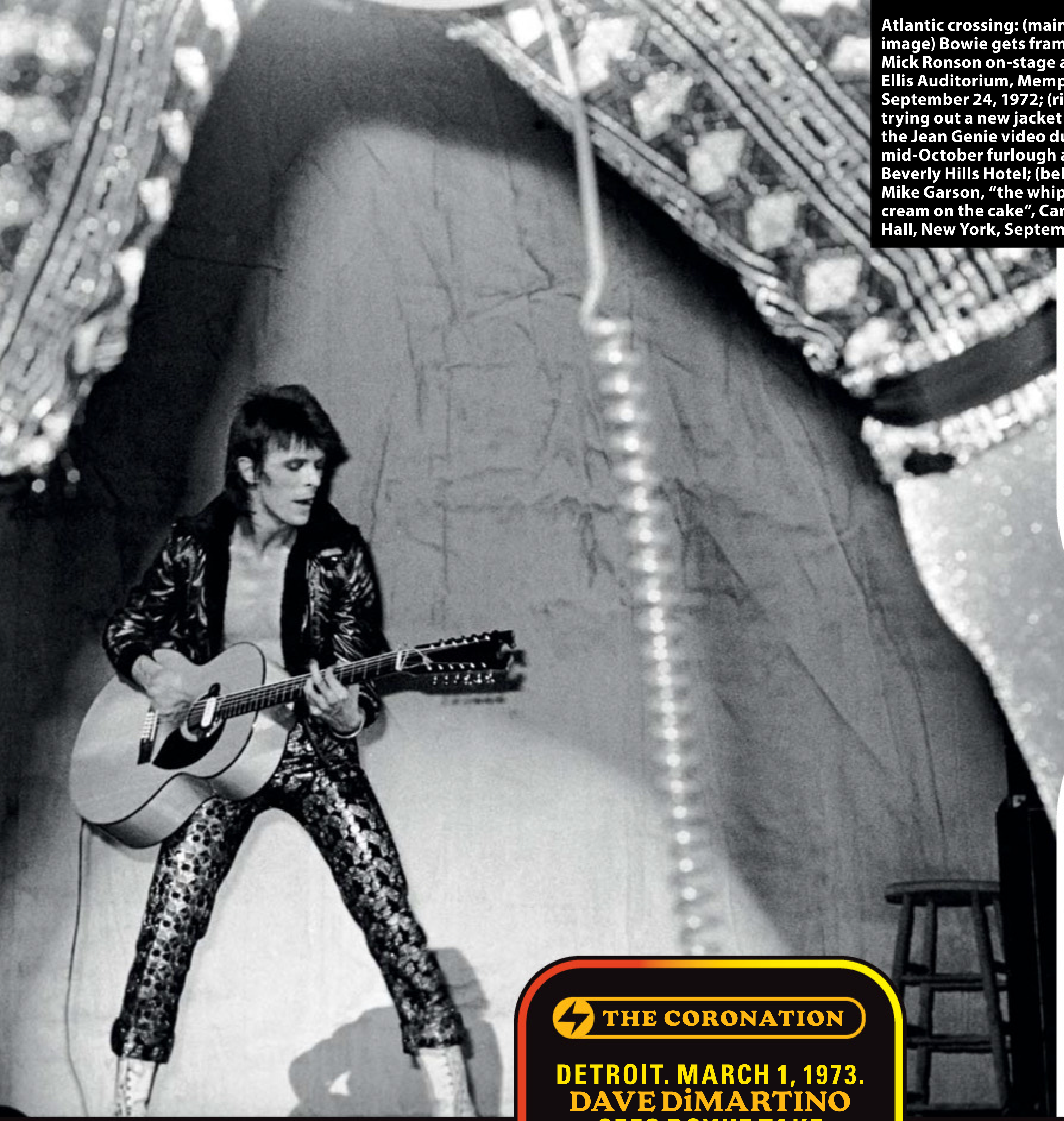
Rolling Stone, which put Bowie, *sans* eyebrows, on its November '72 cover, characterised Defries as Machiavellian and Bowie as cosseted, talented and – for a rock musician – oddly ambivalent about the direction of his work. But instability was all part of Bowie's creative curiosity.

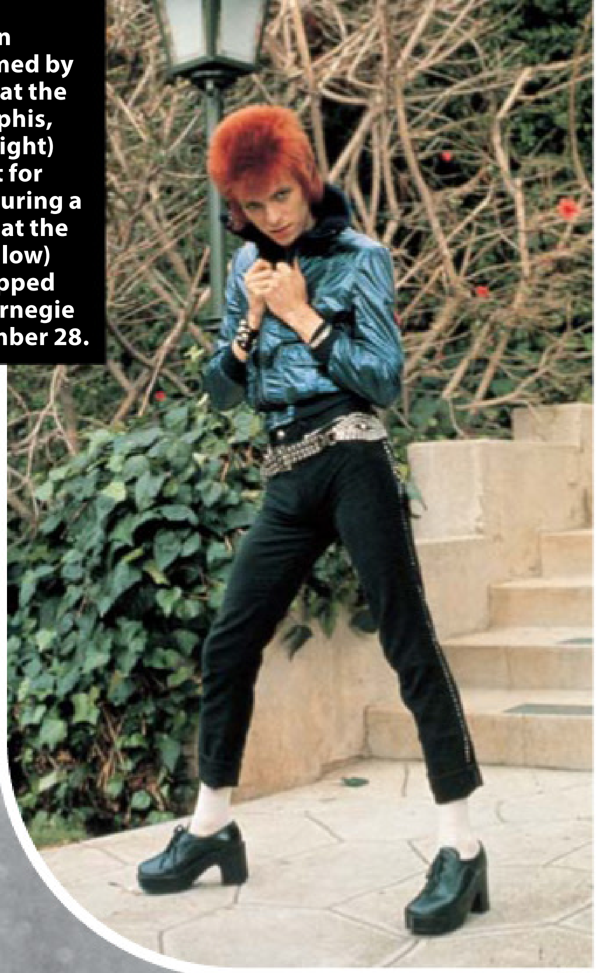
"He loved jazz, he loved classical and he loved avant-garde music, and that's what my life was," says Garson. "Plus, I was an improviser and he loved me playing the parts differently every night. I was the whipped cream on the cake."

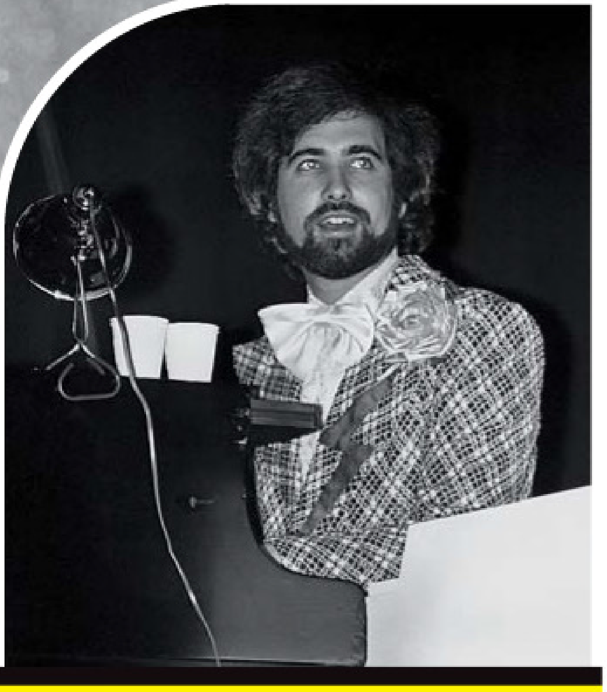
AS BOWIE BEGAN WRITING MATERIAL FOR HIS next album, a 'Ziggy Goes To America'-style travelogue titled *Aladdin Sane*, the travails, excesses and sheer zonedoutness of life on the road increasingly demanded a more widescreen musical approach. After winding up in the States in mid-December, the band played two homecoming shows at London's Rainbow Theatre over Christmas before continuing work on the album at Trident Studios in mid-January. Garson was especially impressed by the studio's Bechstein piano which The Beatles had used for Hey Jude. "You couldn't play a wrong note on it," he says.

Bowie wasn't after wrong notes for the album's chilly, precarious title track he'd written while reading Evelyn Waugh's Vile Bodies on the Atlantic crossing back home. But he did hope for something unexpected during the extended piano break, having rejected Garson's blues then Latin-inspired try-outs. "I'd already told him about the crazy gigs I'd been doing in New York playing dissonant, atonal stuff and using my elbows. So he said, 'Can you do something like that?'"

Garson's scintillating free improvisation did much to define the follow-up album's disruptive







Atlantic crossing: (main image) Bowie gets framed by Mick Ronson on-stage at the Ellis Auditorium, Memphis, September 24, 1972; (right) trying out a new jacket for the Jean Genie video during a mid-October furlough at the Beverly Hills Hotel; (below) Mike Garson, "the whipped cream on the cake", Carnegie Hall, New York, September 28.

ambition. Still today, it remains a highlight in Bowie's career and a masterclass in rock risk-taking. And there was more. For Time, Garson drew on the Berlin theatre songs of Brecht/Weill as well as Cabaret, the hot film of 1972. Garson insists he "got lucky" on Lady Grinning Soul, the album's quietly seductive closer. "It seemed to call for that very romantic, pianistic style of playing, lots of runs and notes almost like Chopin or Liszt.

"David didn't micro-manage," Garson explains. "He was looking for magic. He trusted me. He was like Miles Davis in that way. I just channelled things and people he loved."

The second US leg kicked off on February 14, 1973, at New York's Radio City Music Hall. After an encore of Rock'n'Roll Suicide, Bowie fell to the floor. Many assumed it was part of the act, some thought he'd had a heart attack, others insisted they'd heard gunshots.

"He fainted," says Garson. "He wasn't eating that day. He had make-up all over his body, so his pores had closed, and he was probably dehydrated too. We brought him backstage and I helped revive him before the nurse got there."

Nevertheless, questions were now beginning to be asked about Bowie's state of mind. "We were all a little concerned," admits Garson, who'd lost friends in the jazz world to drugs. "David lost a bit of himself because he was so dedicated to the art. You get so into the role that your vulnerability ends up screwing you up. You either come back or you don't. David was one of the lucky ones."

But first he had to get Ziggy off his back. Having toured the States, Japan and, in early summer, Britain, Bowie was shagged out and wafer-thin. It was also time to move on. At the Hammersmith Odeon on July 3, 1973, he announced his 'retirement' from the stage. Garson, perhaps the only Spider who'd been tipped off, warmed up the crowd that night. "He knew that a lot of people would be there – The Rolling Stones, The Beatles, Barbra Streisand. He asked me to turn a few songs into a medley. It was like an overture to a Broadway show."

Garson stayed with Bowie until 1974, hooked up again in the 1990s and accompanied the singer at his last public performance for an emotional Life On Mars? in 2006.

"Ziggy Stardust set him up for life," he says, pondering the persona's significance in the big picture of Bowie's career. "I saw the trajectory of this guy's life. Though it sometimes looked like it could have been a personality, or acting, it was none of that. This is who the guy was, and what he was painting. This was David Bowie."

Mick Rock (3)

THE CORONATION

DETROIT. MARCH 1, 1973. DAVE DiMARTINO SEES BOWIE TAKE AMERICA.

THERE MAY have been no better place or time to first hear Panic In Detroit than in that city itself – watching it performed at the Masonic Temple Theatre by David Bowie And The Spiders From Mars during the Ziggy Stardust tour, months before the release of *Aladdin Sane*.

"The largest Masonic building in the world," as the venue still bills itself, was packed with joyfully rowdy Detroiters who'd missed the man at his unheralded local debut the prior October and now had two nights to catch up. If the title of the new song itself was not local recognition enough, that Bowie had been working on mixing The Stooges' *Raw Power* – released just weeks earlier – and had plopped a 'Z' in front of 'Iggy' to name his fictional superstar did not go unnoticed.

And this was a juiced-up band. Joining Ronson, Bolder and Woodmansey were five extra players, including pianist Mike Garson, whose impact was considerable. His keyboard riffing on the previously unheard *Aladdin Sane* title track was dazzling, even offering Bowie the opportunity to unexpectedly ad lib the chorus of On Broadway at its end. Combined with the frequent costume changes Detroit witnessed in no small awe, it made all sorts of sense.

And with the opening chords of Space Oddity – just re-released by RCA to cash in on Ziggy's success – everyone leapt out of their seats, roaring. This was fricking *great*.

If it was any indication, America was loving David Bowie, and this was his moment.

THE LEGACY

"ANYTHING ZIGGY DID NOW WOULD JUST BE REPETITION"

ALTHOUGH BOWIE WAS KEEN TO MOVE ON, KILLING ZIGGY STARDUST WAS EASIER SAID THAN DONE, FINDS **MARTIN ASTON**.

EVEN BEFORE DECLARING "THIS IS THE LAST SHOW we'll ever do" Bowie had built the dramatic device of self-destruction into Ziggy's narrative. As far back as 1967, Bowie's mime piece The Mask had weighed up the power of illusion, the danger of what lay behind the mask when finally removed, and the cost of success. The rise and fall of Ziggy Stardust was proof of the prophecy.

"It was quite easy to become obsessed night and day with the character," Bowie told Rolling Stone's Cameron Crowe in 1976. "I became Ziggy Stardust. David Bowie went totally out the window. Everybody was convincing me that I was a Messiah."

Bowie had hit the reset button ample times since joining The King Bees in 1964, but never before had he called time on a wildly successful incarnation. Yet removal of the Ziggy mask does not appear to have derailed him. In fact he forged forwards, adding Lulu and Ava Cherry to his extra-curricular projects while he furiously plotted his own moves: the covers LP *Pin-Ups*, and a musical adaptation of George Orwell's 1984.

"I had a certain idea of what I wanted my rock'n'roll star to be like," he said soon after Ziggy's retirement. "I've gone as far with that as I possibly can. The star was created; he worked, and that's all I wanted him to do. Anything he did now would just be repetition, carrying it on to the death."

If Ziggy left Bowie with any residue of madness, it was the obsessional need to escape him, or at least keep the momentum going. Marc Bolan had launched the '70s but Bowie had launched the revolution: boys could be girls, girls could be boys, a pop or rock star could transcend denim and leather and be anything they liked. As his doppelgänger Brian Slade says in Todd Haynes' 1998 glam rock fiction Velvet Goldmine, "Strange people are chosen, and through their art move progress along."

Ziggy had personified those ambitions, so there was no way to completely exorcise his presence. Vestiges clung on in the costumed stagecraft of NBC's TV special, The 1980 Floor Show – recorded in October and broadcast in November 1973 – and *Pin-Ups*' Twiggy-and-Ziggy artwork, both featuring two-thirds of the Spiders, Mick Ronson and Trevor Bolder. Ziggy's flame-orange feathercut remained for the promo campaign for Rebel Rebel and its parent album *Diamond Dogs*, even though Bowie was talking up a new persona, Halloween Jack. Rebel Rebel and LP cut Rock'n'Roll With Me were also intended for a proposed Ziggy Stardust: The Musical, a plot that Bowie discussed in a shared interview with dystopian sage William Burroughs.

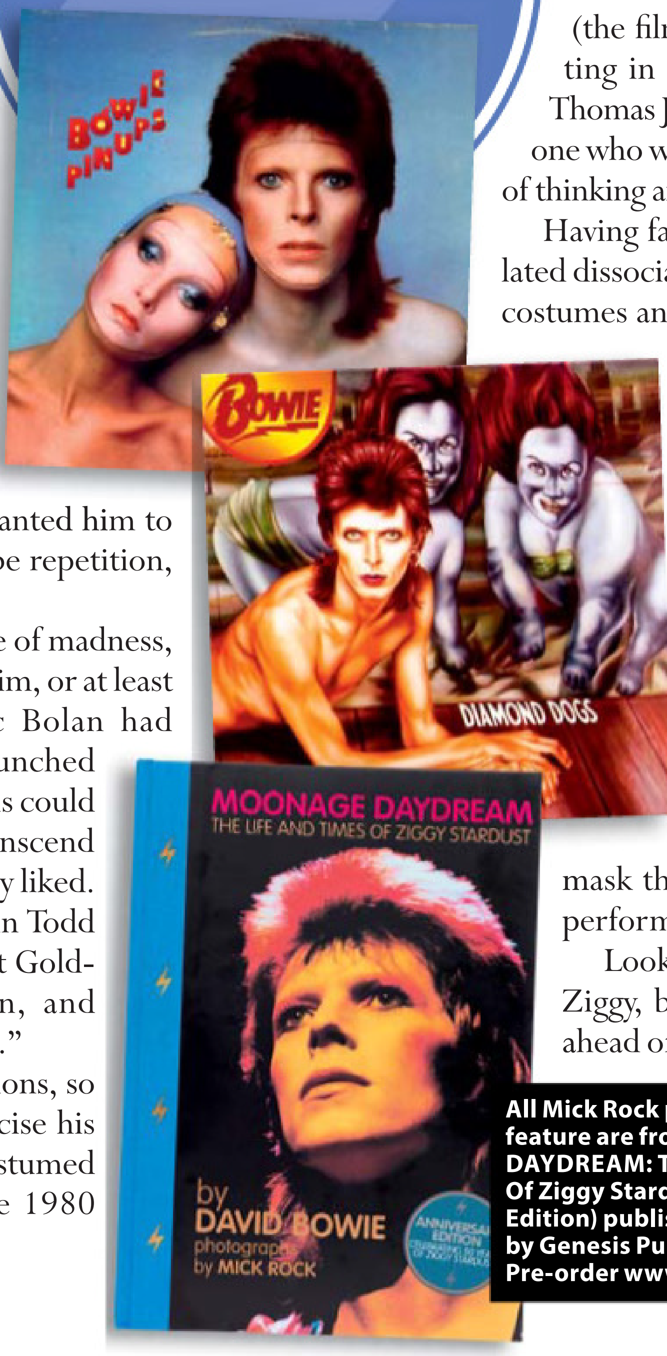
The Diamond Dogs tour of late '74 introduced a new wedge hairdo but 'future shock' sci-fi was still the main script, staged in a post-apocalyptic cityscape and with Rock'n'Roll Suicide still the final encore. After the musical artifice of *Young Americans*/'Plastic Soul', the arrival of *Station To Station*'s Thin White Duke, though less flamboyant than Ziggy, rekindled the latter's mythology: the imperious outsider who sucked up into his mind.

> "THE IDEA OF BOWIE-AS-ALIEN WASN'T LOST ON MOVIE CASTING AGENTS."

THE IDEA OF BOWIE-AS-alien – arguably the foundation of his subsequent mystique – wasn't lost on movie casting agents seeking convincing extra-terrestrials, and the singer seriously contemplated joining an adaptation of Robert Heinlein's sci-fi novel Stranger In A Strange Land (the film was never made) before committing in 1975 to The Man Who Fell To Earth. Ziggy and Thomas Jerome Newton's storylines even overlapped: "Someone who was dropped down here, got brought down to our way of thinking and ended up destroying himself," said Bowie.

Having fallen to earth himself, via cocaine addiction and related dissociative states, Bowie dropped the sci-fi, characters and costumes and went 'au naturel' for what we now call the Berlin era. But fans would not let Ziggy go (in 1977, Bowie lamented that they would still approach him and say, "What's happening on Mars at the moment?") and he was back in the mix when Bowie suggested the Spiders re-form for his 1978 World Tour. Nixed by Mick Ronson, the idea was Bowie's first sign of backsliding, though the five-song *Ziggy Stardust* interlude in the setlist was suitably modernised. Ziggy's DNA could even be gleaned in Bowie's Pierrot outfit on the cover of *Scary Monsters (& Super Creeps)* and Ashes To Ashes promo, echoing Bowie's manifesto for Ziggy and rock: "The music is the mask the message wears – music is the Pierrot and I, the performer, am the message."

Looking back, whenever Bowie took risks in the spirit of Ziggy, both in performance and music, staying one step ahead of his imitators and eschewing commercial decisions, he made his finest and most influential work. In the '80s, with *Let's Dance* and the emergence of 'Dave From Brixton' – a nor-



All Mick Rock pictures in this feature are from MOONAGE DAYDREAM: The Life And Times Of Ziggy Stardust (Anniversary Edition) published on June 21 by Genesis Publications, £45. Pre-order www.BowieBook.com

Mick Rock (2), Getty

Falling to Earth: (clockwise from above) taking a nap on the London to Aberdeen, May 15, 1973; facing the press in New York, December 1972; greeting his fans in 1973.

mal, bankable mainstream rock star – he turned away from the idea of rock as something psychically transformative, and Ziggy could be viewed as a quaint relic. "I find it very refreshing to look at," he said in 1984. "It was an extraordinary phenomenon in rock at the time." Ziggy nostalgia could be discerned in the circus of costumed stagehands (not forgetting the title) of 1987's Glass Spider Tour. But this wasn't a risk, more a desperate act of self-preservation, with Bowie at an all-time creative low.

That wasn't the case when Bowie revived the possibility of Ziggy: The Musical in 1999, to be launched in time for the album's 30th anniversary – "I'll develop him and his environment and his society," he promised, with bonus photographic, theatrical, cinematic, online and album material. Perhaps the scale of the task overwhelmed him, or by 2002, he'd moved on. That year, reviewing ageing and mortality on the *Heathen* album, Bowie covered I Took A Trip On A Gemini Spacecraft, written by Legendary Stardust Cowboy, whose name and unstable personality Bowie had siphoned for his alter ego.

In 2015, Bowie eventually settled for Lazarus, AKA the musical of The Man Who Fell To Earth, a brave and baffling stage drama steeped in multiple personalities and fractured imaginations but, curiously, no Ziggy-era songs bar the contemporaneous All The Young Dudes, Bowie's gift to Mott The Hoople that formed part of Ziggy's end-times narrative. Lazarus's ambitions were mirrored by Bowie's swansong *Blackstar*, with its astronomical gaze, and the storyline of the title track's video, centred on a jewelled skull found inside a space helmet. The final resting place of Major Tom, or, given its alien aura, perhaps Ziggy's remains?

Fifty years – not five – after the iconoclastic birth of Ziggy, it's staggering to consider his catalytic impact, not just in terms of broadening gender and sexual roles but pop and rock's entire trajectory, as Bowie invested in the concept of music as performance spectacle and the artistic principles of transformation. Ziggy's blueprint is manifest in Madonna and Prince, Lady Gaga and St. Vincent, in the energy of renewal that inspired punk rock and other pop mavericks to step outside of 'what you see is what you get' with another kind of tension. Ziggy's life also epitomised the connection between star and fan that still persists today: you're not alone, gimme your hands. Far from a rock'n'roll suicide, Ziggy will outlive us all.

THE COLOURIST

FOR *ZIGGY'S* ICONIC COVER, IT WAS TERRY PASTOR WHO MADE BOWIE A BLOND.

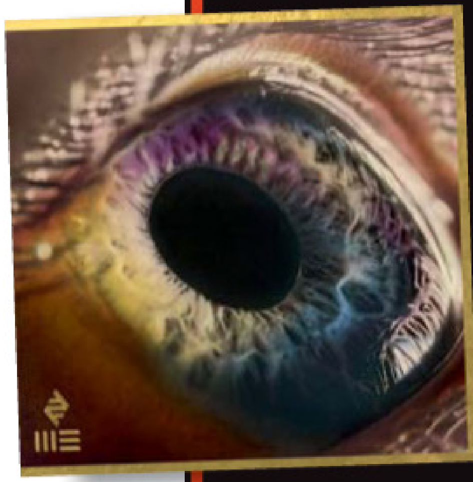
BY MARTIN ASTON.

WHEN TERRY PASTOR first met Bowie in 1971, the illustrator was sharing a studio – christened Main Artery – with Bowie's school pal George Underwood. Asked to colourise a black and white photo for the cover of *Hunky Dory*, Underwood felt that airbrush specialist Pastor – who had illustrated Top Rank film posters, book jackets and magazines such as Playboy – was more suited to the task. "Bowie liked what I did, and asked me to do the same for *Ziggy*'s cover," Pastor tells MOJO today.

Retouching Brian Ward's photographs for front and back images, Pastor chose yellow-blond for Bowie's hair "so that it would stand out, a bit Midwich Cuckoos-looking, especially radiating under the light in the phone box." Likewise, turquoise for Bowie's jumpsuit. "It was otherwise quite a sombre, dark, grainy photo," says Pastor. "I chose purple for his boots, and green for the door because of the old song Green Door. A hand-coloured photo has a very different, odd, atmospheric quality to a colour photo."

Pastor met Bowie only a handful of times. "One time, we went to the pub. I don't remember him talking about art, or Ziggy, though he was into sci-fi. But he did visit the studio with Angie one day, and saw my cover for [UK band] Byzantium, of laced-up leather mittens holding a crystal, and they were like, 'Ooh, S&M, love it!'"

Despite his Bowie covers' iconic status, Pastor exhibited neither in his portfolio. "The work didn't indicate my real talent," he says, "for fully airbrushed illustrations, like cars and surreal stuff. It's only since Bowie died that people have noticed, like, 'What you did for Bowie, do for us,' which Arcade Fire just have for their album, *We* (left). They wanted that hand-coloured feeling; nothing digital."



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> “Mavis Staples doesn’t interpret a song so much as treat it like it’s always been hers to sing.”
>
> **SYLVIE SIMMONS’ MIDNIGHT RAMBLES, ALBUMS PAGE 96**

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Sparking Joy

Grief and light combine to potent effect on singer-songwriter's sixth album.
By **Victoria Segal**. Illustration by **Peter Strain**.

Angel Olsen

★★★★

Big Time

JAGJAGUWAR. CD/DL/LP

ANGEL OLSEN
BIG TIME

UNCERTAINTY AND turmoil can trigger two standard creative responses: an attempt to replicate those emotional shatter patterns and seismic shocks, turning all the disturbance and disorientation into brutal art, or else a move towards the familiar and comforting, something with deep roots, stable sides, solid foundations. *Big Time*, Angel Olsen's sixth album, emerges from a period of axis-shifting change. Last April, she came out to the world via Instagram, captioning a picture of her partner, Beau Thibodeaux, with "My beau, I'm gay". While she was ready to celebrate her identity, however, she lost both her parents in cruelly quick succession. Three weeks after her mother's death, the North Carolina-based Olsen was in her co-producer Jonathan Wilson's Los Angeles studio recording *Big Time*. "I was a little afraid that I wouldn't be able to do it," Olsen tells MOJO, "but right away I realised it was the best thing for me to do because I didn't want to be at home just staring at the wall."

There has always been a great deal of movement in Angel Olsen's music – her 2017 compilation was called *Phases* with good reason. "I was safe when I was in the womb," she sang on 2012's woodcut debut *Half Way Home*, but since then, her songs have suggested an ongoing struggle to fix steady coordinates. The video for All The Good Times, the first song released from *Big Time*, unfolds in tumbling flashbacks – including one where she wears the distinctive silver wig from the video for 2016's Shut Up Kiss Me. At one point, she seems to be trying to run down a version of herself in her car. The message – like that of the splendidly poised break-up song – seems clear: this is a new beginning. Later, on the fragile This Is How It Works, she sings, "I am moving everything around/I won't get attached to the way that it was", a forced emotional spring clean, somebody grabbing the corners of her life and shaking them out to see where everything lands.

While most of the songs were written before her bereavement and as a result of the break-up of her previous relationship, Olsen acknowledges that their performance was inevitably influenced by her loss. Low on the bandwidth needed to rehearse with her band, they remained fresh in the studio, resulting in a different kind of immediacy. With its enveloping synth-pop, 2019's *All Mirrors* felt like a strange chrysalis, Olsen moving obscurely within its opaque walls, reconfiguring cells, upgrading her form. Her next two releases were curiosities: Aisles, an EP of '80s songs (including Men Without Hats' Safety Dance) and the compelling *Whole New Mess*, songs from *All Mirrors* in their beautifully stark original form. *Big Time* doesn't feel like a definitive transformation – it's still tender and unfurled in places – but it does have a new clarity, a sense of masks peeling away, veils dropped. That directness largely springs from its well-deep country influences – not the parched Americana of 2010 EP Strange Cacti and 2014's *Burn Your Fire For No Witness*, but the meltwater country of Patsy Cline and Tammy Wynette, Olsen's elusive voice at its most limpid.

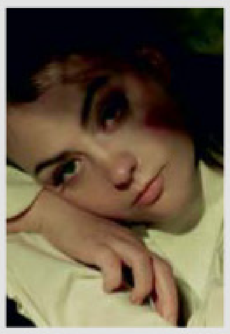
While Jherek Bischoff's string arrangements were important to *All Mirrors*, here the instrumentation is used not to smoke-screen and dramatise, but to clear space, horns, organ and pedal steel opening up the air around her, the synths replaced by blood-warm keyboards and piano. "I need to be myself/I won't live another lie," she sings on the defiant Right Now, while All The Good Times begins, "I can't say that I'm sorry when I don't feel so wrong any more" – her phrasing impeccable, her voice catching the light like a stray rhinestone.

It's followed immediately by the title track, a song that Olsen – cautiously, she wryly explains – co-wrote with her partner. The aim was to write a "gay country love song" about their meeting – with its coffee, kisses and declarations of love, it's just that, its gingham wholesomeness coming with a hard-fought undertow. For once, it's not complicated. At the other end of the spectrum, however, is This Is How Is Works, the song dealing with the death of Olsen's mother. "I've never been too sad/So sad that I couldn't share," she sings with a tight exhausted smile as the pedal steel trickles around her. Unlike *Big Time*'s fresh dawn, it feels like somebody who has been up all night, clinging to the edges the country structure provides.

Yet for all its immediacy, *Big Time* isn't without mystery. There are phantoms and visions, even if they come bathed in the record's amber half-light rather than the blue chill of earlier records. Dream Thing references her early work with Will Oldham ("I was searching my mind for the words to that Black Captain song"), wrestling with the idea that something so valuable to you could mean so little to somebody else. The past is always there, tugging at the hem of her subconscious: the etherised piano of P.J. Harvey's *White Chalk* seeps around Ghost On, while Go Home sees Olsen declaring, "I am the ghost now/Living those old scenes." It's a moment of sudden furious yearning for something lost, Bridge Over Troubled Water softness roughed up by Olsen's sudden Patti Smith yowl.

Unsurprisingly, given the circumstances of its making, there's a vulnerability to *Big Time*. The crazed-glass fragility of All The Flowers fights to exist in the moment; Through The Fires, a luscious ballad that sounds like South Pacific scored by Weyes Blood, is further testament to survival, Olsen's voice spinning away like a weather balloon: "Higher higher lighter lighter". Chasing The Sun's soundstage glow, meanwhile, sees Olsen lost in love's delirious dissolution of the self. One (ironic) way to read the title of *Big Time* is that Olsen has 'arrived' – yet as she closes this record by driving into the horizon, it's clear she still hasn't reached any final destination. "I could not come back the same," Olsen sang on Lark, the opening track of *All Mirrors*, and, once again, she hasn't. *Big Time* is a country staging post, a space for clarity and comfort in difficult times, but it is also the sound of somebody moving everything around, finding a new arrangement, a different way to push forward.

> "*Big Time* has a sense of masks peeling away, veils dropped."



BACK STORY: CALL MY AGENT

- "The reason why I wanted to call it Big Time was because I felt like after all that happened, I was never the same," explains Olsen. "I like when a title can mean a lot of different things. I'm trying to write a script right now and I'm like, 'What do we call it?'" The script, she says, is "exercise for myself. But it's so hard to take yourself seriously doing something you've never done before. Like, who do I think I am? I like music but it's not everything for me. As I'm getting older there are other things I'd like to do. Even if I fail at them, I'd like to try."

ANGEL SPEAKS! OLSEN ON DENIM OUTFITS, WALLS OF SOUND AND "BITTER DUDES".

ANGEL OLSEN

Including

ALL THE GOOD TIMES
BIG TIME
DREAM THING
GHOST ON
ALL THE FLOWERS

RIGHT NOW
THIS IS HOW IT WORKS
GO HOME
THROUGH THE FIRES
CHASING THE SUNS

BIG TIME
NEW ALBUM

A A D
MCAD-87

BIG TIME

STEREO

DeLuxe Record Set

This must be an Angel: Olsen leans into Americana on her sixth album.

"It was a bit Fleetwood Mac..."

Angel Olsen talks to Victoria Segal.

How are you?

"I woke up with a head cold so I'm a little bit out of it. Other than that, I feel really grateful – I'm really excited about this record. I'm looking at outfits and stuff for the band to wear on tour. Last time, I got them these baby-blue suits, but they were a wool-polyester blend and they absolutely hated me for it because they were so stinky. I was thinking, 'What if, since this is a country record, I have everyone wear denim?' Then I saw that Harry Styles's backing band was playing with all denim on at Coachella. I was like, 'OK, whatever – we can still do denim.'"

You think of this as a "country record"?

"I think some of it is leaning toward Americana and stuff like that but it's not, like, a Kacey Musgraves record. It's not country in the way a lot of people think of country. I listen to a lot of '70s stuff like Neil Young and Kris Kristofferson and I like that kind of music."

You've peeled back the goth atmospheres of *All Mirrors*...

"It wasn't my intention for the vocal to be that loud! When we were mixing, I kept saying to Jonathan [Wilson, co-producer], 'You know you can bring the band up!' I like that the instrument of the record is the voice and what I'm saying. A lot of my career since [2010 EP] Strange Cacti was me trying to build a wall of sound behind me that would sort of get people's attention to hear the words – and now I don't need to turn a pedal steel on its head, it doesn't have to do backflips. We can just make something good that's classic-sounding and has space in it."

On Dream Thing, you sing about trying to remember the lyrics to Bonnie 'Prince' Billy's Black Captain [Olsen was in Will Oldham's band around 2011's *Wolfroy Goes To Town*]. What's that about?

"It's kind of a reflection of working with Bonnie 'Prince' Billy and [his collaborator] Emmett Kelly. My relationship with them now is non-existent. You spend two years working with someone and memorising all their songs to never speak to them again. It was professional almost to a fault. I was having dreams a lot about Emmett because we had dated briefly and I had finally seen him after years of not talking with him and it was really nice. It was such a formative time for me, I couldn't really let go of how weird that experience was. I'm really grateful for all the things I learned about being in a touring band – but when I got my band together and started to tour, I was like, 'I want to do it differently, I don't want it to be disconnected, I don't want it to be cold.' I was such a child then, I was just learning and it took me a long time to grapple with the fact that I would never be close to these people I spent this really excellent time with. It was a bit Fleetwood Mac – I didn't understand at the time maybe don't date someone in the band. Would I be here without having that experience? Would I have written *Burn Your Fire For No Witness*? I don't know if I would have written it. Part of that record was me being like, 'Fuck the patriarchy and fuck bitter dudes!'"

Horsegirl

★★★★

Versions Of Modern Performance

MATADOR. CD/DL/LP

Teen Chicago trio deliver impeccable debut of artful clatter and bruised melody.

Their no wave-influenced immediacy and noise-driven invention push Horsegirl's offbeat post-punk firmly ahead of the pack. Teenaged scions of Chicago's teeming DIY all-ages scene, the trio's debut album is rich in textural sophistication, carving hooks from fidgety harmonics and swooning whammy-bar abuse. But the staccato choruses and Sonic Youth-ish refrains of the unshakeable Option 8 and surging, single-chord loveliness Worlds Of Pots And Pans prove they're no slouches when it comes to a tune, either. Their reference points are impeccable, echoing the no-fucks-given ennui of late-period Chastity Belt and the murky effortlessness of Guided By Voices, but the mystery and charm that characterise this remarkable debut are all their own. "Fall into my wormhole," Nora Cheng and Penelope Lowenstein intone hypnotically on the majestic Homage To Birdnoculars. And fall you will, without any need of rescue.

Stevie Chick

Drive-By Truckers

★★★★

Welcome To Club XIII

ATO. CD/DL/LP

Southern rock's premier survivors turn their dramatic past into poignant anthems.

Live long enough, and you'll have some proper stories to tell – that's a goal, at least. Arguably America's most dependably great rock band for the last quarter-century, Drive-By Truckers have never been short on memorable tales, with portraits rendered from assorted carousers of the American South. But after a string of timely political missives, the Truckers turn inward and backward here, transforming times they almost died, should have died, or perhaps wished they would've died into nine crackling odes to survival. With his trademark gothic drawl, Patterson Hood limns close highway calls with perspicacity, then mourns the compatriots he's lost to foibles and vices alike. Perennially underrated Mike Cooley, meanwhile, hands in some of his sharpest-ever writing on Every Single Storied Flameout, like R.E.M. plus brawn, a definitive take on the (glorious) ways rock leads kids astray. Long may these Truckers roll.

Grayson Haver Currin

Jean Carne

★★★★

JID012

JAZZ IS DEAD. CD/DL/LP

Veteran soul singer rolls back the years in astounding new work for the Jazz Is Dead series.

Carne's fans tend to fall into two distinct camps: those who gravitate to her late-'70s disco-soul anthems for Gamble & Huff's Philadelphia International label and others who prefer the more experimental, jazz-tinged work with her keyboard-playing ex-husband Doug from the early part of the same decade. This, her first album in 26 years, masterminded by producers Adrian Younge and Ali Shaheed Muhammad, has much in common with the singer's pre-Philly output for the Black Jazz label during the early '70s. The opener, Come As You Are, sets the tone with Carne's astral vocals soaring over a blend of woozy Rhodes chords, warbling synths and a deeply churning bassline. Carne's five-octave voice is astonishingly supple for a 75-year-old, shining brightly on Black Rainbows and People Of The Sun, two delectable slices of trippy, interstellar soul-jazz.

Charles Waring

Lykke Li

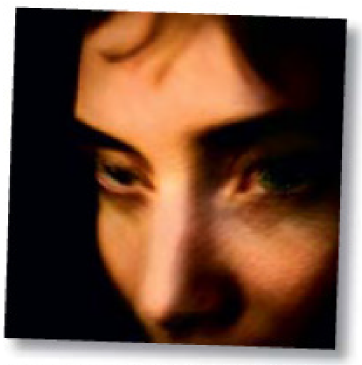
★★★★

Eyeye

PIAS. CD/DL/LP

Swedish singer-songwriter's fifth album is a dreamy, audio-visual experience.

After the clean lines and R&B trap of 2018's *So Sad So Sexy*, Lykke Li tries to break the cycle of love addiction that has fuelled so much of her pensive songwriting. Co-produced with long-term collaborator Björn Yttling, this 33-minute suite was recorded in her LA bedroom with a $70 drum mike and analogue synths. It has a gentle, pared-down intimacy, flowing with acid ballads and devotional dream pop. Where *So Sad...* had a hard-edged energy, this LP revolves around self-forgiveness and regret. Linked with a short palindromic film, her songs have an eerie intensity, with chiming melodies and church organ filtered through airborne sound and glitches, like Li is mining the inner recesses of her psyche. Some tracks have sunnier, more open chords, but most powerful are the looping, levitating rhythms of You Don't Go, and the seven-minute closer U&I.



Lucy O'Brien

Graham Nash

★★★★

Graham Nash: Live

PROPER. CD/DL/LP

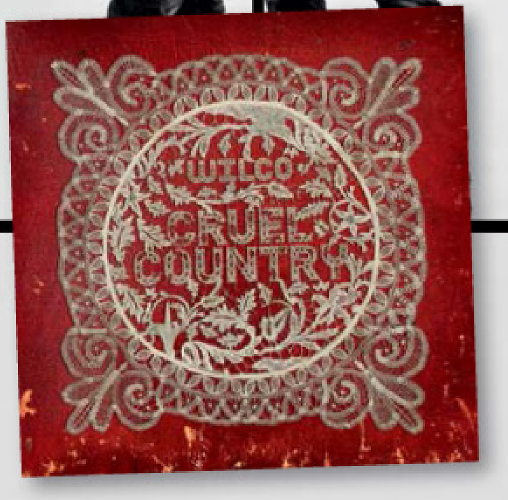
Nash revisits his first two solo albums live in concert.

In September 2019, Nash and a full band did a handful of shows within driving distance of NYC, where they played, start to finish, one after the other, his 51 and 48-year-old albums *Songs For Beginners* and *Wild Tales*. There were encores and between-song chats – the glory of Joni; the evil of war – but here we have just the two albums' 20 songs. The debut – one of several solo releases by CSNY post-*Déjà Vu* – is the stronger of the two, heartfelt and unpretentious. Nash's voice (like Neil's and Crosby's) has barely changed and the band arrangements are mostly subtle and complementary (There's Only One's sax solo; Simple Man's Neil-esque harmonica; Sleep Song's pedal steel). Other highlights include Chicago (updated to "Don't ask Trump to hear you"), I Used To Be A King, and slow, sombre Another Sleep Song.

Sylvie Simmons

Saddling up: Horsegirl are mysterious and charming on debut LP.

Wilco: Jeff Tweedy (above, left) and co create a musical genre all of their own.



Roots radicals

Back together in one room, songs flowing, Wilco determine to reshape country. By Tom Doyle.

Wilco

★★★★

Cruel Country

DBPM. CD/DL/LP

FOR ALL their love of the genre, Wilco were never really a country band – too grungy on their 1995 debut, *A.M.*; stretching out into '60s Beach Boys pop and '70s Stones-y rock on the multi-directional '96 double *Being There*. Twenty-six years later arrives their second twin-disc-length album, hot off the press after being recorded, live in the studio and with few overdubs, in the first months of 2022. But while singer Jeff Tweedy declares that with this twelfth record, for once, Wilco are "digging in and calling it country", this is far from a rootsy, back-to-basics affair.

Since the "American Radiohead" tag was affixed to them from 2001's masterful *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot* on, as a band they've advanced further into and then retreated from art rock, leading to the minimal and precise sound of 2019's *Ode To Joy*. This, in some part, brings us to the more trad-leaning *Cruel Country*, though the exterior influences of our tense times also had an effect. Tweedy claims that since the world outside the studio was already strange, Wilco didn't feel they wanted to be, and so returned to the comforting familiarity of folk and country forms. The deluge of 21 tracks here, meanwhile, is a product of the shared joy of the six-piece group finally being back together face-to-face in the studio.

If there's a recurring theme, it's one involving Tweedy's conflicting, occasionally tortured feelings about the "dying empire" of 21st century America. The title track addresses this directly ("I love my country/Stupid and cruel") as its clip-clop horse hooves percussion makes it come over like a weary cowboy song. In this way, *Cruel Country* is partly an ode to a troubled nation, part musical genre all of its own. Assessing the American psyche within the acoustic, '64 Beatles-in-Tennessee contours of Hints, he states that "we'd rather kill than compromise".

The Plains, meanwhile, explores modern stasis – whether induced by lockdown or laziness – and watching the vast spaces of the US continent on a TV screen, rather than getting out and exploring them. Elsewhere, the longest track here (at near eight minutes), Many Worlds, looks upwards, Tweedy drawling like a hippy stargazer, amid a swirl of spacey piano and echoing organ, finding comfort in the knowledge that he's not the only one staring at the heavens.

Throughout, the productions veer between something akin to country traditional – the '60s Nashville moves of Falling Apart (Right Now), the shades of Hank Williams that colour Please Be Wrong – and far weirder atmospheres. The latter reach their twin peaks with the slurred vocal oddness of The Empty Condor and the band collapsing into messy arpeggios in parts of Tonight's The Day.

Wilco have been on a long, strange trip as an art rock band, and so they return forever changed to confidently shape a form of country music that is entirely of their own character. Maybe they couldn't even make a straight roots record if they tried, as underlined by the title of one track, Country Song Upside Down. As Tweedy puts it here in breezy strummer All Across The World: "I've seen too much".

Solar, so good: Elizabeth Fraser and Damon Reece.

Ray Of Light

The first new music in 13 years from the former Cocteau Twin. By Victoria Segal.

Sun's Signature

★★★★

Sun's Signature

PARTISAN. CD/DL/LP

IN 2012, during a vanishingly rare interview, Elizabeth Fraser was asked whether she ever had any teenage dreams of leaving her hometown, Grangemouth. "No, I never thought of the next day," she said. "I just had a lot of something – what was it? So much sun, I suppose, running through me. All this wonderful sun! An Apollonian spirit, if that is a word."

If that was the light that guided her towards her time in Cocteau Twins, it has often been hidden in the 25 years since the band fell apart. There have only been intermittent flickers since, through guest appearances (Massive Attack, Jónsi, Oneohtrix Point Never among them), occasional music for museum installations and soundtracks, and 2009 single Moses. Sun's Signature, a collaboration with her partner Damon Reece (long-time member of Spiritualized and drummer with Massive Attack), started to coalesce when they played Anohni's Meltdown in 2012; 10 years later, some of those songs have been captured to their satisfaction, the product of a meticulous – or maybe perfectionist – process.

Given how long Reece and Fraser have been keeping the five tracks on Sun's Signature close, they could have succumbed to a worrying airlessness, but they rarely sound overworked, their precision instead creating layered depths and delicate intricacy on the slow evolutions of Apples or Golden Air. Fraser's voice, higher and more tightly tethered than before, no longer threatens to spin off into the ether in a delirium – there's even something close to a moment of spoken word on Bluedusk – but it has lost none of its impact nor its beauty. Beyond the ominous synthesized undercurrents, the instrumentation – timpani, woodwind, vibraphone – often has a surprising theatricality, the hint of orchestra pit lending an unexpected hushed intimacy, while outside players, including former Genesis guitarist Steve Hackett on three of these prog-beholden tracks, expand Fraser and Reece's bubble without bursting it.

Time, fittingly, plays curious tricks on Sun's Signature, songs switching between rapid time-lapse and treacly slow-motion, sometimes existing in the vivid varicoloured moment ("the morning is come!") sometimes wandering in the past. "Summer is gone/The autumn of my life," sings Fraser on Paranoid Android torch song Underwater, a track first seeded on a limited-edition white label 22 years ago. Bluedusk, meanwhile, a Broadcast-tinged lullaby constructed around "lyrical excerpts" from Anohni, exists in the moment where today slips into yesterday.

The closing Make Lovely The Day sounds like an ancient madrigal, Hackett's Spanish guitar bending and bowing around Fraser's voice: "See him rise/And make lovely the day". There might only be five songs here, but each one has a similar transformative effect – welcome evidence that, despite Fraser disappearing behind the clouds, all that wonderful sun has not dimmed yet.

Eva Vermandel

Bartees Strange

★★★★

Farm To Table

4AD. CD/DL/LP

Ipswich-born, DC-based indie-rocker with heart on sleeve – and talent to burn.

Bartees Strange's second album is entirely without irony; its emotional power will make you glad that is the case. Formerly employed by an environmental non-profit and Brooklyn punks Stay Inside, Strange now deals in elegantly volcanic indie rock, with a love of exultant hooks, and a soaring, soulful voice. There's playfulness here, too – check the vocodered shout-outs to his celeb friends on Co-Sign – but *Farm To Table* peaks as Strange makes poetry of the big issues. Its beautiful intensity evoking Jeff Buckley, Tours finds Strange making peace with the absence of his military father throughout his youth; Hold The Line, about George Floyd's daughter Gianna, is a subtly devastating meditation on loss. Hennessy, meanwhile, bears aloft its resonant meditation on hope and blackness with grace and poetry. Strange's earnestness is artful, and *Farm To Table* an uplifting triumph.

Stevie Chick

Kelly Lee Owens

★★★★

LP.8

SMALLTOWN SUPERSOUND. CD/DL/LP

Dark prognostications set to ethereal, hypnotic electronica.

A persistent, heavy throb punctuates the opening salvo of this wind-swept third album from Welsh sonic auteur, Kelly Lee Owens, like the threat of some oncoming monstrous fate. Recorded in Oslo with Lasse Marhaug – who's worked across the experimental spectrum with the likes of Sunn O))) and Jenny Hval – together they paint things beautifully black. Release is an off-kilter industrial techno banger that hits with piledriving intensity, but the overall pace is sedate, if no less impactful. Owens' soft-toned voice is to the fore on the eight-minute Anadlu (Welsh for 'breathe'), a saturnine, ambient lament. Owens circles back to themes from 2020's acclaimed *Inner Song*, such as her grandmother's death on muted, neo-classical piece, Nana Piano. The planet's own existential crisis seems key: "This is a wake-up call/What you gonna do about it?" Owens intones over a Death Star alarm pulse on Sonic 8. Perhaps *LP.8*'s general air of foreboding is a manifestation of its creator's concerns for humanity itself.

Stephen Worthy

Steve Cradock

★★★

A Soundtrack To An Imaginary Movie

KUNDALINI MUSIC. CD/DL/LP

Going it alone, the Midlands Mod exhibits his meditative outlook.

The cover image is apt. The all-instrumental fourth solo album by Ocean Colour Scene mainstay and Paul Weller sidekick Steve Cradock could accompany slowly moving abstract images – perhaps of magnified blood cells or the dance between planets and their moons. *A Soundtrack To An Imaginary Movie* is stately, almost New Age-y, and suggests immersions in Delius, Philip Glass, and atmospheric Italian soundtracks of the late '60s/early '70s (especially on the groovy, Hammond-accented Cochineal; the 10 tracks each bear the name of a colour). While evidencing internal contemplation – Dragon Blood features Cradock's wife Sally on gongs and Tibetan singing bells – more direct communication comes through the contributions of the late UB40 sax player Brian Travers on Sarcoline, and Annatto's nods to Fleetwood Mac's Albatross. This tantalising album needs recreating in an appropriate live setting.

Kieron Tyler

The Range

★★★

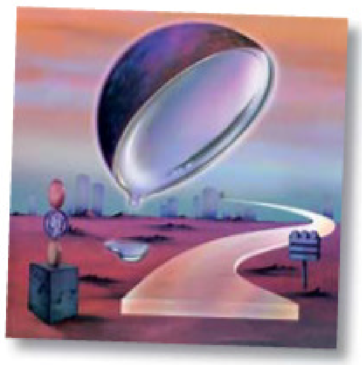
Mercury

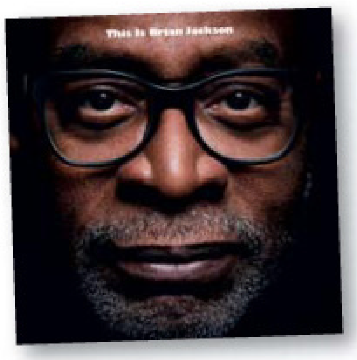
DOMINO. CD/DL/LP

Reflective, rave and grime-flecked electronic pop.

Despite being raised in north Pennsylvania and now living amid the bucolic charm of Vermont's Green Mountains, James Hinton's music as The Range identifies strongly with sounds from this side of the Atlantic. He makes frequent stops along the UK bass continuum, with a particular fondness for grime, rave and Aphex Twin – as well as classic hip-hop beats. *Mercury* comes six years after Hinton's previous album, *Potential*, in which he gave a platform to bedroom vocalists found on social media. It's a technique revived here, albeit more subtly. Ricercar features an Instagram singer covering Toni Braxton and a dramatically cut-up version of The Turtles' I'm Chief Kamanawanalea, a '90s hip-hop sample staple. The result is serene, uplifting and Moby-esque. While the dark, hulking chords of Urethane are peppered with the rapid-fire delivery of a Brit grime MC, Balm does as its title suggests by folding squelchy, slo-mo acid into a trembling bassline. This trick of balancing heavy and light serves *Mercury* well.

Stephen Worthy





Brian Jackson

★★★★

This Is Brian Jackson.

BBE. DL/LP

Classic soul funk from former Gil Scott-Heron collaborator.

In 1977, while recording *Bridges* with Gil Scott-Heron – his musical partner from 1970-80 – Brian Jackson started demo-ing tracks intended for his debut solo album. They remained unfinished, but when the Phenomenal Handclap Band's Daniel Collás approached him at a New York show and suggested they work together, the pair took the tracks as the starting point for what Collás conceived as Jackson's first proper solo outing – 2000's *Gotta Play*, his actual first, though competent, could have been better. *This Is Brian Jackson*, however, captures Jackson at his very best. His flute passages, soaring, flickering, melodious; his keyboard work spiritual and lyrical; his vocals smooth and heartwarming. These eight songs are both questing and healing, from the classic *Bridges*-styled All Talk to the meditative Nomad and hypnotic Afrobeat groove of Mami Wata.

Lois Wilson

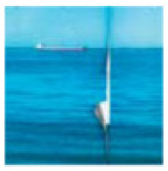
Craig Finn

★★★★

A Legacy Of Rentals

THIRTY TIGERS. CD/DL/LP

Hold Steady man curates "memorials, incantations, affirmations, legends and prayers."



Mindful of the notion that we all want our lives to be consequential, Finn's fifth solo album tunes his long-honed storytelling gift to our imperfect remembrances of things past, self-mythology and absent friends. Adept at expressing keenly observed details in a Beat vernacular, he makes excellent use of a 14-piece string section and more drum machines than are typical of him, eulogies such as Messing With The Settings and the Spanish guitar-imbued Jessamine intricate evocations of folks gone too soon. That Finn's satisfyingly dense narratives have their own music is perhaps most obvious on the bossa nova-like spoken word track A Break From The Barrage, which transmits "a modern sense of loneliness." Props, too, for Cassandra Jenkins and Annie Nero's relatable, naturalistic backing vocals, which enhance proceedings much as Joanne Catherall and Susan Ann Sulley enhance The Human League.

James McNair

Florence + The Machine

★★★★

Dance Fever

POLYDOR. CD/DL/LP

Her fifth album, but first in four years.

DANCE FEVER

Having painted themselves into a musical corner, 2018's *High As Hope* seemed to mark the end of the first phase of Florence + The Machine. The follow-up was originally planned as a collaboration with Taylor Swift's producer Jack Antonoff in New York. Then, with their work far from complete, lockdown forced Florence Welch back home, although the glacial opener King and the Human League throb of Free hint at what might have been. Instead, she joined forces with Glass Animals leader Dave Bayley. Their recalibration incorporates the Florence of old on the modern-day madrigal Heaven Is Here and the ferocious Dream Girl Evil. But there's a reborn, less wind-tunnelly Florence on the spine-tingling, road-misery lullaby Morning Elvis, where she visits Memphis, but not Graceland. Rather than falling between the two stools, she's taken a great leap forward at the very moment one was required.

John Aizlewood

Hollie Cook

★★★★

Happy Hour

MERGE. CD/DL/LP

Excellent fifth LP from Sex Pistol Paul Cook's daughter.

HOLLIE COOK
Happy Hour

Where Hollie Cook's previous albums were overseen by Prince Fatty or Youth (who is credited as 'executive' producer here), this fifth outing is her most autonomous to date; with Cook and her General Roots band firmly at the controls. The result is a coming of age for both Cook and modern lovers rock, with the nine songs a sumptuous wash of mellow melodic groove and soft, soulful voice. The chief touchstone is Carroll Thompson and, as with Thompson, Cook's songs deal with the female everyday; the romance and the pain and what gets us through. From Full Moon Baby's rejoicing in new birth and Praying, a musical salve for the broken hearted, to Move My Way which sways to the sounds of carnival, and Kush Kween, a collaboration with Jah9 that celebrates the medicinal herb, *Happy Hour* is warm, nourishing, a genuine delight.

Lois Wilson

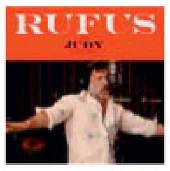
Rufus Wainwright

★★★★

Rufus Does Judy At Capitol Studios

BMG. CD/DL/LP

Famed for bombast, the American-Canadian singer finds poignancy in a spartan setting.



"Take it down a notch!" Rufus Wainwright quips at the close of his rapturous rendition of Alone Together, a century-old standard about the power of coupledom. He is playfully scolding his loudly clapping audience of one – Renée Zellweger, the actress who, like Wainwright, found a new act in playing Judy Garland. In 2021, Wainwright and a laser-sharp jazz quartet gathered at Capitol for a livestream of a dozen-plus Garland favourites, a miniature reprise of his lavish *Judy At Carnegie Hall* symphonic recreations, with only Zellweger in attendance. The restraint fits both moment and music, with Wainwright climbing inside muted but magnetic takes on How Long Has This Been Going On? and Over The Rainbow to find timely strata of darkness and hope. *Rufus Does Judy At Carnegie Hall* was a spectacle of splendid imitation; here's a showcase of sensitive interpretation.

Grayson Haver Currin

Shearwater

★★★

The Great Awakening

POLYBORUS. CD/DL/LP

Avid birder leads Austin-Texas outfit into late-period Talk Talk terrain.

Life looks rich for Shearwater linchpin Jonathan Meiburg. His ornithological globe-trotting yielded a book on caracara falcons, 2021's A Most Remarkable Creature, praised by Margaret Atwood and Laurie Anderson, and now comes his band's immersive seventh album, their first LP in six years. Peppered with natural world field recordings, and a sizeable left-field advance on 2016 protest album *Jet Plane And Oxbow*, it peaks with Xenarthran, a song inspired by Texan armadillos whose imaginatively curated textures evoke the bustling undergrowth of Björk's Human Behaviour. Elsewhere, as Talk Talk-like guitar fragments chime or crash, Highgate erupts with tectonic drama, and Meiburg's close-miked voice nests somewhere between Mark Hollis and Morten Harket, these opaque, often uneasy sounding songs conjure nature's unpredictability and vulnerability as well as its beauty. The vibe is very much that of a disquieted David Attenborough testifying to camera.

James McNair

Neneh Cherry

★★★★

The Versions

EMI. CD/DL/LP

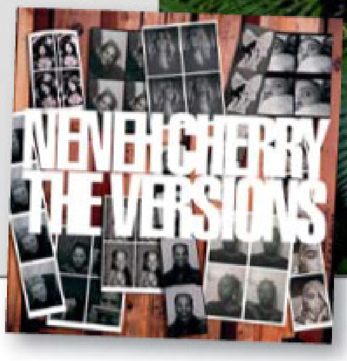
All-female album of collaborations and covers – with a Cherry on top.

An archive-filled documentary, an upcoming memoir, and now this album of all-female contemporary covers and collaborations: Neneh Cherry's 2022 is all about asserting her legacy. And what a legacy it is. *The Versions* revisits the early years of Cherry's back catalogue, reminding us how fresh and forward-thinking it was, and still is. 1989's Manchild, a whirling, jazz-inflected piece of pop genius, is covered fairly faithfully by 21st-century pop giant Sia, and still feels brand new. 1996's Woman, covered movingly and sagely by Anohni, becomes a majestic fuck-you, then comes the turbo-fuelled romp through 1992's Gang Starr collaboration Buddy X by DJ Honey Dijon. Better still is a slower, trip-hop take on 1992's Sassy by Cherry's daughter Tyson, once the baby in her famous bump, and a euphoric ride through Buffalo Stance with Robyn and Mapei. Whip-smart and wonderful.

Jude Rogers

On the ball: Neneh Cherry – always fresh and forward-thinking.

Juergen Teller



Dylan Moon
Option Explore

Dylan Moon

★★★★

Option Explore

RVNG INTL. CD/DL/LP

Enigmatic dream-fazed pop from the LA-based musician.

When MOJO first heard Dylan Moon in 2019 he seemed impossible to place. Reminiscent of both the frail Bristol folk-psych of Movietone and Crescent and Denver's Elephant 6 collective, the sounds made by this former Berklee College music student seemingly existed somewhere between bold florescence and introverted collapse. With his second LP he sounds simultaneously more certain and yet more abstracted, referencing the '80s UK synth-pop pastoralism of Bill Nelson, Deux Filles, Virginia Astley and A.C. Marias but also the precise pop rhythms of Scritti Politti and early China Crisis. Melodically, not everything reveals itself on first listen, and Moon's song titles – Hmm; Plot Points; Hello Mirage – foreground this sense of concealment; part of the pleasure here is in something being intentionally withheld. Yet there is just enough, in Moon's haunting melodies, that keeps you coming back to try and work out exactly *why* you keep coming back.

Andrew Male

Σtella

★★★★

Up And Away

SUB POP. CD/DL/LP

Greek indie favourite's gorgeous fourth album taps her family roots.

Σtella (no surname given) had forged ahead at home but Sub Pop will doubtless boost her visibility elsewhere, especially as *Up And Away* is warmer and grittier than its '80s-polished predecessors, infused with the '50s/'60s trad folk and hybrid pop records her grandparents and parents spun for her. UK producer Tom 'Redinho' Calvert, meanwhile, brings knowledge of '60s soul traditions, creating myriad twists on two seemingly opposing strands, starting with the title track's bouzouki/(zinger-style) kanun laced with a Motown beat. The album's spiritual/lyrical core is Manéros, Greece's traditional love-struck ballad, ironically the title of the LP's sole instrumental, and the only moment of pure Balkan, just as The Truth Is aims for shimmering soul – a sound fit for Dusty – but then *Up And Away* overall feels something like Σtella In Memphis.

Martin Aston

ΣTELLA
up and away

Hercules & Love Affair

★★★★

In Amber

SKINT/BMG. CD/DL/LP

Queer NYC dance collective go dark. Anohni guests.

On HALA's preceding album, *Omnion*, linchpin Andy Butler's signature tropes – disco, deep house, electro – carried additional traces of post-punk gothic; the partial soundtrack to his traumatised teenage years. With its echoes of This Mortal Coil and Clan Of Xymox, plus thudding drums from Budgie, *In Amber* goes the whole hog, to soundtrack what Butler describes as "destruction, rage, loss." Abandoning HALA's multi-vocal approach too, Butler – no born singer but impressively stentorian – alternates with Anohni, back for the first time since their 2008 debut. With lyrics such as, "Dystopian ecstasy/Secular eschatology", it's as much her record, but the pair are clearly singing from the same haunted hymn sheet. *In Amber* is nevertheless frequently beautiful, and occasionally offers succour. As the urgent One puts it, "Rise up… seek your truth… remember, no more dying."

Martin Aston

Alex Izenberg

★★★★

I'm Not Here

DOMINO. CD/DL/LP

Now you see him: Los Angeles singer-songwriter makes his presence felt.

There's something unnerving about the title of Alex Izenberg's third album, a suggestion of disembodied lurking, intimations of Syd Barrett's Jugband Blues self-erasure. The songs, however, ostensibly seem committed to solidity and substance. Lush string and woodwind arrangements (courtesy of Dirty Projectors' David Longstreth), opulent imagery and a debt to classic rock songwriting – CSNY, Harry Nilsson – build a strong decorative exoskeleton around Ivory or Gemini Underwater. Yet Izenberg's downbeat voice (curiously reminiscent of Gruff Rhys at times) is well-matched to themes of vanishing love and slow loss, while the gorgeous chamber-pop of Broadway, Juniper And Lamplight's soft piano lament or Sea Of Wine's meandering hush seem to dissolve as you listen. There's no missing *I'm Not Here* – it's too beautiful for that – but like the love that flits through these songs, it's not always easy to hang onto.

Victoria Segal

Sault

★★★

Air

FOREVER LIVING ORIGINALS. CD/DL/LP

Once-anonymous neo-soul collective make leap to neo-classical.

After five albums of peerless genre-blurring soul and Afrobeat, Sault's sixth is a tangential move. Producer Inflo's growing penchant for complex and dramatic orchestration was first showcased on Introvert from Little Simz's 2021 album *Sometimes I Might Be Introvert*, but here he dedicates a whole album to it, in a seven-track, beats-free, 45-minute-long suite that is impressive in its execution – wordless male and female choral voices conspiring with washes of strings and percussive brass to create swirling atmospheres – but all too frequently tends towards the bombastic. There are moments of real beauty (Cleo Sol's multi-layered vocals in the coda of Time Is Precious; the slow-burning title track), and *Air* may well prick up the ears of film producers looking for new scoring talent, but as a listening experience in itself, it's often heavy-going.

Tom Doyle

The Smile

★★★★

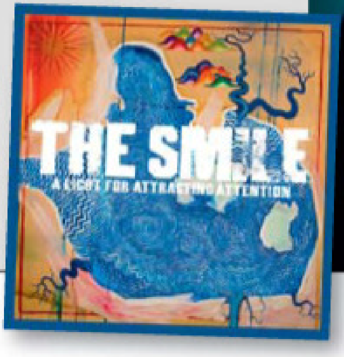
A Light For Attracting Attention

XL. CD/DL/LP

Thom Yorke's elastic trio assume crash positions.

Few observers would have put hard-earned on Yorke making a rock-adjacent record in 2022, and fewer that he'd do it without Radiohead, or most of them. But it seems this three-piece format allows him to manoeuvre more nippily than Radiohead's stately battleship. The Smile's crepuscular music flits easily between sonic approaches – MOJO's first-listen notes namecheck the Skids, Talk Talk and Fela Kuti – though guitars and live drums are to the fore, with Jonny Greenwood alternately squiggly and vaporous and Sons Of Kemet drummer Tom Skinner reprising the precision post-punk chatter of his Hello Skinny records. Occasionally, they favour the billowy and formless – Waving A White Flag goes nowhere, albeit moodily – but their best tracks showcase Yorke's songs most transparently; Panavision and Free In The Knowledge are two of his loveliest in years. "I'm drowning in irrelevance," he wails on driving nu-Cure banger We Don't Know What Tomorrow Brings. Here's a life jacket.

Danny Eccleston



Double take: The (unsmiling) Smile – (from left) Jonny Greenwood, Thom Yorke and Tom Skinner.

Alex Lake

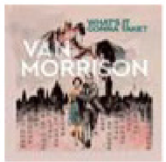
Van Morrison

★★

What's It GonnaTake?

EXILE/VIRGIN. CD/DL/LP

Still miffed, still evangelical about it.



"Somebody said I was dangerous/I must be getting close to the truth," sings mystic seer-turned-conspiracy theorist Van Morrison on Dangerous. Or further and further from it, Van. And so those of us still in thrall to Morrison LPs from *Veedon Fleece* to *Avalon Sunset* must navigate his latest rallying call for the deluded, musing upon how wonderful Can't Go On This Way might be were it concerned with eating potted herring in Ardglass, rather than an untimely rant about Covid restrictions. Morrison's voice is still agile and strong, and the sweet soul music here is light on its feet (witness Sometimes It's Just Blah Blah Blah), but ever convinced of his mission, and stressing that he's Not Seeking Approval, Van seems distant, unavailable. What's it going to take? Feck knows. Some kind of Damascene epiphany.

James McNair

Ambarchi/ Berthling/Werliin

★★★★

Ghosted

DRAG CITY. DL/LP

Fire! rhythm section and Australian composer create new harmonic possibilities from guitar/bass/drums.

Your first question should be: where are you and do you like how it feels? Because, early on into the first track on this gorgeous, transportive record, as the steady plucking of Johan's Berthling's acoustic bass meshes with the organ drone of Oren Ambarchi's guitar, the forest floor crunch-crunch of Andreas Werliin's drums, and the elastic bird calls of Christer Bothén's hunter's harp, you'll realise you're *inside* this music and it feels enveloping, expansive, hypnotic, just right. Recorded live in Stockholm's Studio Rymden on a bright winter's day in November 2018, this is the sound of three men adept at playing loud and fast, choosing to embrace space, light and a rich, serotonin-suffused warmth. It drives, but at no point do you ever fear you are in danger of overload or assault. You feel safe, calm. Just one problem: at 38 minutes, it's all over far too soon.

Andrew Male

Auntie Flo & Sarathy Korwar

★★★

Shruti Dances

MAKE MUSIC. DL/LP

Scottish dance DJ and Indian jazz percussionist exploit ancient wind instrument's meditative powers.

Some collaborations are meant to be. Three years after Auntie Flo transformed Sarathy Korwar's clamouring battle cry Mumbay back into a stripped house banger, they've pooled their talents with the unexpected swerves and switches of their rhythmically-inclined exploration of the shruti box. A harmonium-like instrument, used by Allen Ginsberg to augment his beat poetry on-stage, it's re-purposed here as a means of dancefloor destruction – supplying the pulsing central motif to the tabla-driven Dha and Goa beach party vibes of Pa, up-tempo affairs sprung from forceful grooves. The union peaks on Ni, as Flo's shruti drones and synths interweave with Korwar's full-on tom-tom attack, before they head for the sunset, with added birdsong, on sleepy coda Sa – a much gentler subversion of traditional forms.

Andy Cowan

Grant-Lee Phillips

★★★★

All That You Can Dream

YEP ROC. CD/DL/LP

Former Grant Lee Buffalo man spins gold from "staggering" recent events on eleventh solo album.

Off the road and canny enough to promote 2020's *Lightning, Show Us Your Stuff* via home livestreams, a restless, domiciled Phillips was always going to get busy. He's surpassed himself with this intimate late flourish, where the burning of Notre Dame, the ugly 2021 storming of the US Capitol and the hubris of space-bound billionaires feeding into 11 searching, beautifully rendered songs which rhythm section Jay Bellerose and Jennifer Condos finesse with artful subtlety. If the Only Living Boy In New York-like pitch and roll of Rats In A Barrel and pump organ-adorned Peace Is A Delicate Thing entrance, it's because, songwriting-wise, Phillips knows where the jewels are stashed, and how to turn the safe lock 'til it clicks. Witness My Eyes Have Seen, a graceful, hymn-like exploration of inhumanity at the US/Mexico border.

James McNair

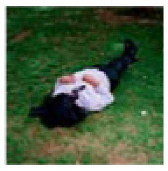
Robocobra Quartet

★★★★

Living Isn't Easy

FIRST TASTE. CD/DL/LP

Jazz, punk and political despair infuse Belfast outfit's sharp treatise on modernity.



A band that mixed and matched feral punk, free jazz and acerbic social commentary while Black Country, New Road were in short trousers, the relatively unsung Robocobra Quartet have got better and more bitter on album three. As before, Nathan Rodgers' bass lands the biggest hooks as a trio of sax players weave between drummer/singer Chris Ryan's twitchy Ian MacKaye/Gordon Gano *sprechgesang* on the jackhammer rallies of stockbroker confessional Heaven, buzzsaw attack of Plant and Patrick Bateman blankness of Wellness (a tapestry of influencers' daily routines). Elsewhere, Chromo Sud's flurrying brass jolts and breakbeats add spiritual sustenance to its weary repeated mantra: "Shit house, shit flat, got keys, got out." A whip-smart confluence of observation, poise and flow, *Living Isn't Easy* is a storied triumph.

Andy Cowan

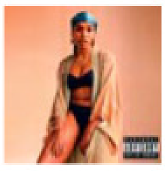
Yaya Bey

★★★★

Remember Your North Star

BIG DADA. CD/DL/LP

Unfocused, casually profound excellence from poet/singer/producer/rapper.



The debut album proper from this DC-via-New-York polymath is a maddening, wonderful thing. Bey is ever restless, her tracks often fragmenting within two minutes as she chases after her next idea. But if the essence of *Remember Your North Star* is as hard to pin down as its creator herself, the album's peaks are unforgettable – the warped lovers rock of Meet Me In Brooklyn, the way she destroys an errant love in a single verse on Rolling Stoner, the wicked hookline of Keisha ("The pussy's so good/And still you don't love me"). And while she is mercilessly funny, a palpable sadness lies beneath; Reprise – wherein Bey tries to make sense of generations of fucked-up relationships – is, in its own scattered way, profound. A little more focus could deliver a masterpiece, but this wilful mess is haunting, charming and highly recommended.

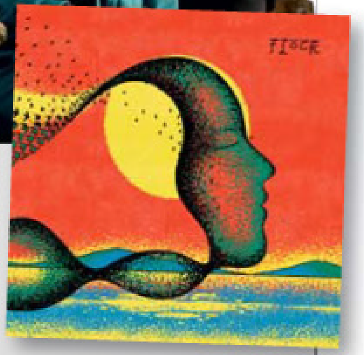
Stevie Chick

Stargazing: Yaya Bey is haunting and charming on her debut.

Lawrence Agyei

JAZZ

BY ANDY COWAN



Flock

★★★★

Flock

STRUT. CD/DL/LP

Five heavyweights of the new British jazz scene step into the unknown.

First brought together remotely last year, Flock boast a singular group chemistry at odds with its members' other endeavours. Their slow-release debut rests on the hypnotic percussive bedrock of drum/tabla meister Sarathy Korwar and gyil titan Bex Burch (Vula Viel), allowing the keyboard atmospherics of Danalogue (The Comet Is Coming) and Al MacSween (Maisha) free rein as baritone saxophonist Tamar Osborn (Collocutor) bears the melodic weight. Her haunted horns tangle in the ethereal synth mists of Prepare To Let Go and the disquieting shape-shifting of Bold Dream, before developing distinct heads of steam, but are eclipsed by the ebbing sonorities of How Many Are One and quirky meditations of It's Complicated – searching efforts just shy of 15 minutes apiece. More than the sum of its parts, *Flock* is never less than intriguing.

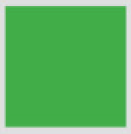
ALSO RELEASED

Anteloper

★★★★

Pink Dolphins

INTERNATIONAL ANTHEM. DL/LP



The latest union of trumpeter Jaimie Branch and drummer Jason Nazary boasts an oceanic theme and comes liberally drenched in squelchy synths and Sun Ra space sounds. Branch's inspired improvisations, bold melodic leaps and bluesy burr of a voice (used far too sparingly on Earthlings) buoy over Nazary's inventive, depth-charged beats, before the sustained eddies of 15-minute closer One Living Genus supply a sweeping, dreamy denouement.

Brigitte Beraha

★★★★

Blink

LET ME OUT. CD/DL/LP

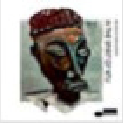
Half-written, half-improvised, Beraha's second LP with her Lucid Dreamers quartet doubles down on the more outré edges of 2020's self-titled affair. A flexible vocal stylist, her often wordless textures bounce off George Crowley's robust tenor sax, Alcyona Mick's rippling keys and Tim Giles's stuttered beats amid slow-burn experiments Modulo 7 and Doors, adding emotional heft to a set packed with off-centre pleasures and subtle delights.

Nduduzo Makhathini

★★★★

In The Spirit Of Ntu

BLUE NOTE AFRICA. CD/DL/LP



As with 2020's *Modes Of Communication*, South Africa's past and present weighs heavily on Makhathini's free-ranging, spiritually deep compositions. Upcoming local musicians help the pianist conjure a rich stylistic mix for slow-building solos with discreet echoes of Bheki Mseleku, Abdullah Ibrahim and John Coltrane. Elsewhere expressive vocal turns from wife Omagugu (Mama) and Anna Widauer (Re-Amathambo) possess healing powers unique unto themselves.

CoN&KwAkE

★★★★

Eyes In The Tower

NATIVE REBEL. CD/DL/LP

Improvised around bespoke saxophone sketches from label boss Shabaka Hutchings, London rapper Confucius MC's relatable flows and drummer Kwake Bass's skippy drum figures conjure a vivid snapshot of modern city life. Their easy chemistry, shaded with burbling basslines and pensive pianos, is potent on the balladic CNS and surveillance-themed title track. It makes for the most seamless jazz/rap marriage in eons. *AC*

Soccer Mommy's Sophie Allison: playing to win.

From Her To Eternity

The Nashville indie rocker's deep soul mining strikes gold. By **Keith Cameron**.

Soccer Mommy

★★★★

Sometimes, Forever

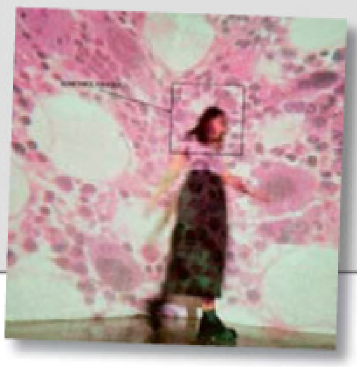
LOMA VISTA. CD/DL/LP

SOPHIE ALLISON'S swift progress from teenage bedroom diarist self-releasing on Bandcamp to public-facing recording artist sharing a label with St. Vincent must have challenged this intrepid auditor of young adult confusion. The final song on her third Soccer Mommy album finds the 24-year-old addressing the downsides of laying it all out there in a world where haters gonna hate across multiple platforms. "I read the things people have to say/They make me feel like I'm not a person," Allison notes on Still, voice sorrowfully blank, words and acoustic guitar downstrokes recalling those early DIY days' unvarnished intimacy. We hear about "white little pills" and an act of self-harm. "I still don't know what I was thinking/But I did it still."

Evoking universal connection from personal agony via sad-faced mid-paced alt-rock requires more than just chutzpah, however, and the growth of Soccer Mommy from solo outlet to successful b(r)and is testimony to Allison's sharpness and ambition as a writer. As Unholy Affliction states, "I don't want the money… but I want perfection." After two albums which conventionally layered up and teased out her simple songs' intrinsic widescreen drama, *Sometimes, Forever* attains new levels of artistry, amid the eye-catching deployment of producer Daniel Lopatin – AKA visionary electronic collagist and Weeknd collaborator Oneohtrix Point Never. Everywhere, the dynamic tension meters bristle: treated guitars pierce the skin of Fire In The Driveway's bare acoustics, and percolating synths murmur a spirit commentary upon its will-they/won't-they break-up scene. The dislocated industrial creep of Darkness Forever has hanging guitar figures scrambling the song's doomy meditation upon Sylvia Plath's suicide.

Counterpointing her devotion to bloody-knuckled self-analysis, Allison possesses a disarming way with pure melody, a quality mined from such obvious touchstones as Tori Amos and Robert Smith: the ultra-hooky Shotgun oozes from a newly unearthed Cure bassline. That voice is key too, a narcotic marriage of Madder Rose's Mary Lorson and The Sundays' Harriet Wheeler. Less expected are the occasional tortured echoes of mid-'00s Bob Mould channelling his inner Liz Phair, yielding counter-intuitively pretty opener Bones and Don't Ask Me's euphoric MBV-blast of self-acceptance. Feel It All The Time, meanwhile, is Peak Mom, a golden-smogged truck-driver's cruise, Sheryl Crow fronting Slowdive on a road trip to nowhere. "And I'm just 22 going on 23/Already worn down from everything."

Such tireless intensity ideally requires reciprocation from the listener, which may not always be realistic or possible. As Sophie Allison admits on Still, "I don't know how to feel things small/It's a tidal wave or nothing at all." Yet her insinuation of millennial angst-pop into pre-millennial alt-rock is so deft and affecting that *Sometimes, Forever* rewards the investment. Soccer Mommy feels like the real deal.



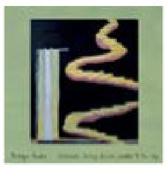
Porridge Radio

★★★

Waterslide, Diving Board, Ladder To The Sky

SECRETLY CANADIAN. CD/DL/LP

Crushing catharsis makes for an uneasy listen.



Few recent LPs have offered such harrowing accounts of personal destitution: on Porridge Radio's third, Dana Margolin isn't just reckoning with a break-up, but a near-total collapse in its wake. In a tone that trembles between despair and disgust, sarcasm and anguished sincerity, she rues that she cannot feel or taste; she sings of shame, peeling skin, and in Birthday Party turns "I don't want to be loved" into a furious tirade. Unlike their bleak 2020 breakout *Every Bad*, the music offers a merciful contrast. The band's Brighton roots are audible in the guitars' tidal lurch and Saltwashed patina (and its echoes of Electrelane and Nick Cave); organs choogle sweetly on Back To The Radio and End Of Last Year, and even the self-lacerating Rotten tumbles warmly. Yet the prettiness somehow makes listening feel more voyeuristic.

Laura Snapes

Kelley Stoltz

★★★★

The Stylist

AGITATED. CD/DL/LP

Former touring Bunnyman's seventeenth album.

Based in San Francisco, Kelley Stoltz has pottered around the alternative fringes for most of this century without coming close to mainstream acceptance. Along the way he's signed to Sub Pop; supported assorted Jack White incarnations; been a Bunnyman after covering *Crocodiles* track-by-track as *Crockodials*; and soundtracked a Volvo commercial in Sweden, while building up a solid cult following. Staying firmly in Ezra Furman or BC Camplight territory, *The Stylist* gives Stoltz's reverb-laden voice a pumping piano backdrop on the typically warm highlight It's A Cold World, or a more avant touch on the gleefully silly Jacuzzi Blues, but You Had To Be There almost breaks into Cockney Rebel's Psychomodo. After all these albums and years, it's hard to imagine Kelley Stoltz breaking through. But on this evidence, there's still no reason why he shouldn't.

John Aizlewood

TV Priest

★★★

My Other People

SUB POP. CD/DL/LP

Second album from scuzzy Hackney quartet signed to legendary Seattle label.

Uppers, TV Priest's debut of 2019, pitched them as swirling, near-psychedelic rockers with an undertow of fury. Stymied by their inability to tour it in 2020, singer Charlie Drinkwater experienced mental health issues ("I am going to take these clothes off now and I will swim out," he threatens on One Easy Thing) and the band retreated into the more self-contained approach which has spawned *My Other People*. Drinkwater's deep, cathartic howl of a voice – part Dave Vanian gothic croon, part Nick Cave circa Boys Next Door – thunders its way through I Have Learnt Nothing and The Breakers. Behind him, though, there's a Jon Spencer-esque crunch to the stentorian It Was Beautiful, while the closing Sunland shows they can slow things down too and Limehouse Cut thoughtfully evokes a London whose capacity to change remains unchanged.

John Aizlewood

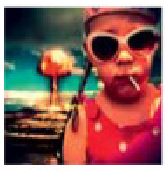
UltraBomb

★★★

Time To Burn

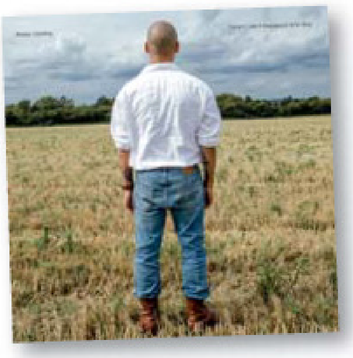
ULTRABOMB. DL/LP

The return of Hüsker Dü's memorably moustached bassist Greg Norton.



Describing UltraBomb as a "supergroup" might be a stretch, but this new trio featuring bassist-turned-chef-turned-bassist Greg Norton should charm fans of his old band, Hüsker Dü. Fronted by singer/guitarist Finny McConnell of The Mahones, with UK Subs' Jamie Oliver on drums, the group make a fine fist of the Dü's fusion of punk noise and frayed folk melody, not to mention Bob Mould's trademark hurricane-in-a-tin-can guitar tone. McConnell's frazzled vocals strain poignantly over the din, with the tidal wave thrash-pop of Time To Burn and the galloping tempo changes of Like The Wind particular highlights. Although the songcraft isn't to Mould or Grant Hart's standard – Star's chorus ("You wanna be a star/And go far") makes Noel Gallagher read like Leonard Cohen – UltraBomb's agreeable noise could certainly hold its own with early Soul Asylum.

Stevie Chick



Binker Golding

★★★★

Dream Like A Dogwood Wild Boy

GEARBOX. CD/DL/LP

Jazz saxophonist shifts gears between Americana, blues and heartland rock.

If the cover is instructive – taken from behind, it shows the elder statesman of the new British jazz school looking out onto pastures new – its contents are more confounding, Golding and band gently twisting out of shape familiar '70s rock tropes. The dynamic stylistic merge of Wide Open Lows and Love Me Like A Woman finds his searching saxophone soliloquies answered back by barnstorming solos from guitarist Billy Adamson and pianist Sarah Tandy, their chemistry explicit in a grandstand climax to the otherwise introspective My Two Dads. While 2019's last solo effort smacked of vintage Blue Note and this year's reunion with Moses Boyd revelled in electronic abstraction, *…Dogwood Wild Boy* rolls with a lyrical flow while slyly subverting from within.

Andy Cowan

Foals

★★★

Life Is Yours

WARNER/ADA. CD/DL/LP

Brit Award-winning Oxford trio go disco.

FOALS
LIFE IS YOURS

Foals were taken aback by how prog *Everything Not Saved Will Be Lost*, their sprawling two-part album of 2019, almost became. Choosing not to replace keyboardist Edwin Congreave, who fled to academia, the now-three-piece decided to strip things down and make a supertight disco album. It's a joyous slab of happiness which evokes Thompson Twins and Duran Duran as much as The Rapture's House Of Jealous Lovers and LCD Soundsystem. There's an undertow of choppy Niles Rodgers-style guitars and the plinkiest of synthesizers add another layer, but everything gels on Wake Me Up, where singer Yannis Philippakis channels his best Simon Le Bon over funk-punk which wouldn't have sounded out of place in mid-'90s New York. It's a beguiling mix for the most part, even if they have overly sacrificed melody on the altar of rhythm.

John Aizlewood

Adrian Quesada

★★★★

Boleros Psicodélicos

ATO. CD/DL/LP

Black Pumas guitarist uncovers the weird world of Mexican uneasy listening.

ADRIAN
QUESADA
BOLEROS
PSICODÉLICOS

A RECORD 20 years in preparation, yet totally 2022, Quesada's first album since the Black Pumas took off is a tribute to the maestros of balada music, the Latin American equivalent of Johnny Harris's big-band sounds of light entertainment on the BBC in the late 1960s and early 1970s. No question, Puedes Decir De Mi (originally recorded by Cuban emigrée La Lupe) would have won Eurovision in 1973, with its mix of heartbroken lyrics, overwrought melodrama and post-*Sgt Pepper* arrangement. In its way, it encapsulates the way pop exploded globally at that point: the guitars, keyboards and effects echoed simultaneously by musicians from Lima and Tehran to Bombay and Phnom Penh. Quesada never overplays his hand, however, never camps it up or winks ironically. A dozen great tunes, a sincere tribute and a glorious time guaranteed for all.

David Hutcheon

Adrian Quesada: has made a sincere tribute to Mexican balada music.

Joan Shelley

★★★★

The Spur

NO QUARTER. CD/DL/LP

The newly rooted songwriter's best album yet.

In a season of loss and isolation, Joan Shelley and Nathan Salsburg married and had their first child. Fittingly, her seventh solo LP is concerned with harmony: between lovers and warring impulses; polarised communities and man and nature: Amberlit Morning, a duet with latter-day domestic bard Bill Callahan – the croaking bullfrog to her birdsong clarity – contemplates romantic and earthly interdependence. The nuanced writing, full of tender challenges to lost souls, and Shelley's warmest sound yet (produced again by James Elkington) make the case for such balance. The sometimes distancing elegance of her prior albums dissolves as she finds new registers – singing from the gut on When The Light Is Dying and Like The Thunder, which hones her underrated carnal writing – and there is a newly confident intuition here, as when the title track ripples from Western-tinged tangle to meditative raga.

Laura Snapes

Liam Gallagher

★★★★

C'mon You Know

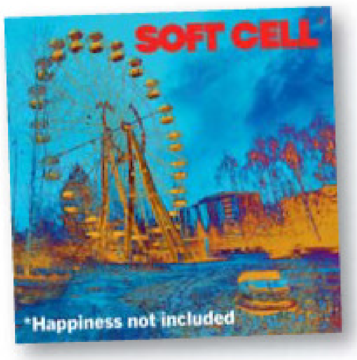
WARNER. CD/DL/LP

Third solo album tweaks the formula but keeps the melodies soaring.

Liam Gallagher – at least on the surface – has of course never been short on self-assuredness, but even still there's real creative confidence on display here, likely fuelled by the two Number 1 LPs that preceded it. If the palette of influences has been expanded, it's to further explore different shades of Gallagher favourites such as The Stone Roses (Don't Go Halfway) and The La's (The World Is In Need), along with trippier touches and even a successful diversion into dub. Lyrically, on the cusp of his 50th birthday, Gallagher is more reflective and confessional – "Mother, I'll admit that I was angry for too long", he offers on opener More Power. Elsewhere, Too Good For Giving Up is a top-drawer ballad (co-written with Cherry Ghost's Simon Aldred), while Dave Grohl collaboration Everything's Electric is one of many rocking highpoints. Another Number 1 surely beckons.

Tom Doyle

LIAM
GALLAGHER
C'MON YOU
KNOW



Soft Cell

★★★★

Happiness Not Included

BMG. CD/DL/LP

Their first studio album since 2002.

Having played their 'final' gig at the O2 Arena in 2018, Soft Cell have been rather busy. Here, Marc Almond's slightly-too sharp voice and Dave Ball's compendium of antique synth tricks are once again a perfect pop match. The opener, Happy Happy Happy, full of childhood memories of a future that never happened, and Polaroid, a song depicting a 1981 Factory meeting with Andy Warhol (the lyrics cleverly reflect the great man's speech ticks: "And I said 'Hi' and he said 'Gee'") see the album start brilliantly. Later, the title track not only includes the weird hint of a flute sound but also a dirty analogue synth that recalls earliest Human League, while I'm Not A Friend Of God depicts the deity as a spiteful irrelevance. The pop standout, obviously, is the Always On My Mind-referencing synth-singalong Purple Zone, a collaboration with the Pet Shop Boys. In an alternative universe, back in 1987, it would be Number 1.

David Buckley

Ural Thomas & The Pain

★★★★

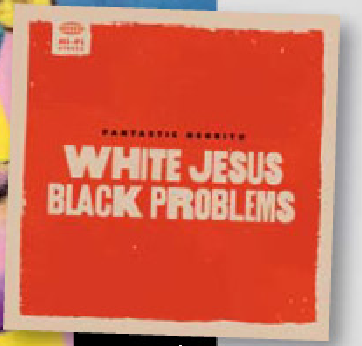
Dancing Dimensions

BELLA UNION. CD/DL/LP

Portland, Oregon soul man hits creative peak at the age of 82.

Far from the days in the '60s when he shared bills at the Harlem Apollo with James Brown and Stevie Wonder, which led not to fame but years of obscurity, Ural Thomas's return to recording activity in 2015 followed the formation of his generations-younger band The Pain. Thomas hadn't been idle, holding weekly jam sessions at home since the '60s, though rarely performing live. As a result, his voice is in remarkable shape, and he often sounds like a singer in his thirties. True to its title, *Dancing Dimensions*, his third album with The Pain, leans more towards psychedelic soul than its predecessors. Highlights are numerous, but the joyfully spacey title track and dynamic R&B showstopper Hung Up On My Dream are the standouts. Performed with verve and decades-honed vocal talent, it's a third act triumph.

Tom Doyle



Fantastic Negrito: living colour.

Fantastic Negrito

★★★★

White Jesus Black Problems

STOREFRONT. CD/DL/LP

Oakland troubadour finds inspiration in his past.

THIS TREMENDOUS synthesis of righteous rhetoric and gnarly, funk-flecked blues-rock reflects an astounding discovery Negrito made while researching his family history: that he is descended from a Scottish indentured servant, Elizabeth Gallamore, and an unnamed black African slave, who lived in Virginia during the 1750s. Inspired to write 50 songs about his ancestors, he eventually whittled the album down to a more digestible baker's dozen; their themes focusing on the uneasy intersection of race, capitalism and enslavement, but also his forebears' courage in the face of adversity. The album's plentiful highlights include Venomous Dogma, a slice of psych-pop meets heavy blues-rock, and the catchy Nibbadip, a jubilant pop-gospel confection with shades of Prince and the Stones in its DNA. A potent artistic tour de force, *White Jesus Black Problems'* message is ultimately a simple but life-affirming one: love can conquer all.

Charles Waring

Fresh Pepper

★★★

Fresh Pepper

TELEPHONE EXPLOSION. DL/LP

A concept LP about musos moonlighting as kitchen staff in Toronto? Could work.

Helmed by War On Drugs saxophonist Joseph Shabason and ex-Deadly Snakes frontman André Ethier, *Fresh Pepper*'s '80s pop-jazz and muzak stylings sometimes conjure late-period Steely Dan obsessing over the restaurant biz. There are twists galore, though, hence the evolving analogue beats of Walkin', and the wonderfully immersive Dishpit, a sudsy, motorik evocation of a sleep-deprived musician battling a conveyor belt of dirty plates. As Shabason, Ethier and guests including Destroyer's Dan Bejar and members of Beverly Glenn-Copeland's band "exorcise past workplace woes", we're party to ambient eatery chatter (Seahorse Tranquilizer), preparatory innovations ("They have new ways of chopping onions/Sous chef dry your eyes"), and a comforting, dog-tired ballad that's part-inspired by rice broth (Congee Around Me). *Fresh Pepper* is indeed, fresh; a unique curio which brings you frayed, Vangelis-like instrumental The Worm as dessert.

James McNair

Kula Shaker

★★★

1st Congregational Church Of Eternal Love And Free Hugs

STRANGEFOLK. CD/DL/LP

Epic scriptural concept by Crispian Mills' psychedelic sergeants-at-arms.

Kula Shaker's 2016 tour, celebrating 20 years since their chart-topping *K* album, underscored their primacy as a punchy live psych-pop combo. This, the fourth offering of their on-off millennial career, showcases their madder, more conceptual studio bent, taking the shape of – cough – a musical battle between St Michael and Lucifer, played out under the leaky roof of an English village church. Mills' hammy sermons from the pulpit won't palliate their critics' 'joke band' barbs. But if you like the idea of *Arthur (The Decline And Fall…)*, *Ogdens' Nut Gone Flake* and *S.F. Sorrow* pulsed in a blender with pips of Strawberry Alarm Clock, gratings of Eddie Hazel and a sprinkle of fairy dust, then this won't disappoint. Gingerbread Man is quite brilliantly barmy, Burning Down winsome Kinks-y folk rock, and bombastic final showdown After The Fall (Parts 2 & 3) both silly and clever.

Pat Gilbert

KULA SHAKER

Mapache

★★★★

Roscoe's Dream

INNOVATIVE LEISURE. CD/DL/LP

Third album from Californian duo Clay Finch and Sam Blasucci.

As winsome, Flying Burrito Brothers-like opener I Love My Dog portends, *Roscoe's Dream* is about as edgy as Sesame Street and all the better for it. Named for the nocturnal imaginings of Sam Blasucci's aged Boston terrier, its guileless, harmony-rich songs are easy like a Sunday morning. Skateboarding pals who later bonded over music, Mapache deal in cosmic country with shades of Mexican bolero, vintage surf and fuzzed-up Tropicália, their name translating from the Spanish as "raccoon". With Beechwood Sparks' Dave Scher guesting on lap steel and melodica, long-term producer Dan Horne at the controls, and Finch and Blasucci toning down the virtuosity they display elsewhere in covers act Grateful Shred, *Roscoe's Dream* drips with escapist charm. Watch out, too, for a rollicking cover of Bo Diddley's Diana that sounds like it's being piloted by Lindsey Buckingham.

James McNair

Various

★★★★

Epiphanies

HALLOW GROUND. DL/LP

Bespoke Swiss label gathers troops for their first 'concept-compilation'.

The 16 artists featured on *Epiphanies* had a working brief to focus on the unique power of acoustic instruments. Japanese sound artist FUJI|||||||||||TA aces it, contrasting the self-built 11-pipe organ that dominated 2020's debut *Iki* with the free reed shō, while radical Swedish composer Maria W Horn displays a captivating contrast between a contrabass recorder and pitched glass. The source of Amosphère's shrill repeated tones, Reinier van Houdt's hallucinatory higher register and Martina Lussi's static storm clouds is more obscure, if equally hypnotic. Elsewhere, label debutantes Magda Drozd, Akira Sileas and Valentina Magaletti eke out small subtleties within their restricted frameworks, on a contemplative 81-minute journey whose slow-release thrills often play tricks on the ear. Its stillness and scope echo *STUMM433*, Mute's revelatory homage to John Cage's notorious 'silent' work.

Andy Cowan

Wallis Bird

★★★

Hands

MOUNT SILVER. CD/DL/LP

Seventh outing from Berlin-based Irish folk-rocker.

Bird likes to reinvent herself, but *Hands* is more than experimentalism, this time chronicling a period of self-acceptance. There's less grungy Ani DiFranco angst and suddenly – in deliriously soulful opener Go – consolidation and anticipation, like a shimmering Ashley Maher. "I'll never move on if I don't go now/Because everything lies in the distance." The syncopated beats of What's Wrong With Changing might be Janet Jackson circa *Rhythm Nation* and, continuing the '80s/90s flavour, No Pants Dance has funk, samples and cosmic growls à la Prince. Trumpet and Spanish guitar make The Dive gently moving ("Look at you there, sun on your wet skin, walking toward my open arms"). From the drinking she's stopped to the childhood loss of a finger, she's finding resolution; and if the album seems to end in mid-air, it's possible this is an ongoing process.

Glyn Brown

Johnny Ray Daniels

★★★★

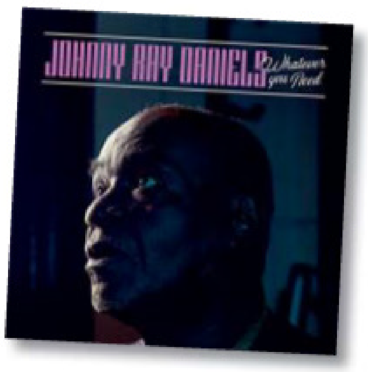
Whatever You Need

BIBLE & TIRE. CD/DL

Excellent solo debut from the 76-year-old North Carolina sacred soul singer.

Johnny Ray Daniels was playing in rock'n'rollers The Soul Twisters when God told him to mend his ways. Soon after, he married Dorothy Vines of the Glorifying Vines Sisters and from then on became their driver and guitarist. He also joined Little Willie & The Fantastic Spiritualaires and last year recorded his debut solo album with producers Bruce Watson and Will Sexton. It's from-the-heart gospel music, but steeped in blues feeling and soulful emotion; renditions of I Shall Not Be Moved and Something Within Me could easily have been worked up at Hi Records or the Muscle Shoals FAME studios. As could the title track, a joyous call and response featuring son Anthony Daniels of the Dedicated Men Of Zion and granddaughter KeAmber Daniels.

Lois Wilson



Andrew Bird

★★★★

Inside Problems

LOMA VISTA/CONCORD. CD/DL/LP

New songs from prolific US indie singer-songwriter/violinist/whistler.

Though the title seems to hint at lockdown fever, Bird has worked incessantly in the year since his last album: movie and documentary scores; an ongoing role (Thurman Smutny) in TV series Fargo; and a new album, his 17th, not counting innumerable side projects. Fans, used to his changes of direction, won't be surprised that this takes a quite different tack to last year's *These 13*, his rootsy collaboration with old friend Jimbo Mathus, sparse, dark, sober gospel and folk blues. Working here with a four-piece band (including producer Mike Viola), these 11 songs – several expansive – are often sophisticated indie pop with a lot going on, musically and lyrically (Underlands; Make A Picture). Inside Problems and Eight (featuring fabulous violin) are the most Americana-sounding, while the more urban Stop N' Shop and The Night Before Your Birthday have echoes of Lou Reed.

Sylvie Simmons

Elizabeth King

★★★★

I Got A Love

BIBLE & TIRE. CD/DL/LP

Second album from the D-Vine Spirituals gospel queen.

In the early '70s Elizabeth King recorded gospel 45s for producer and pastor Juan D Shipp's D-Vine Spirituals label. She then spent the next five decades raising a family before returning in 2021 to record her debut album, *Living In The Last Days*, with Bruce Watson. Watson is back helming this follow-up and Shipp is on board too as King revisits some D-Vine material found in the vaults. Now 78, King sings gospel like a sassy blues mama, blazing through Stand By Me and This Robe, then on the title track, over a Stax-like R&B groove, moaning, sighing, crying, "I got a love, people." Even more impressive, though, is Give Me Wings, an a cappella round sung with her daughters; her raw vocal power something to be truly thankful for.

Lois Wilson

Hannah Sanders & Ben Savage

★★★★

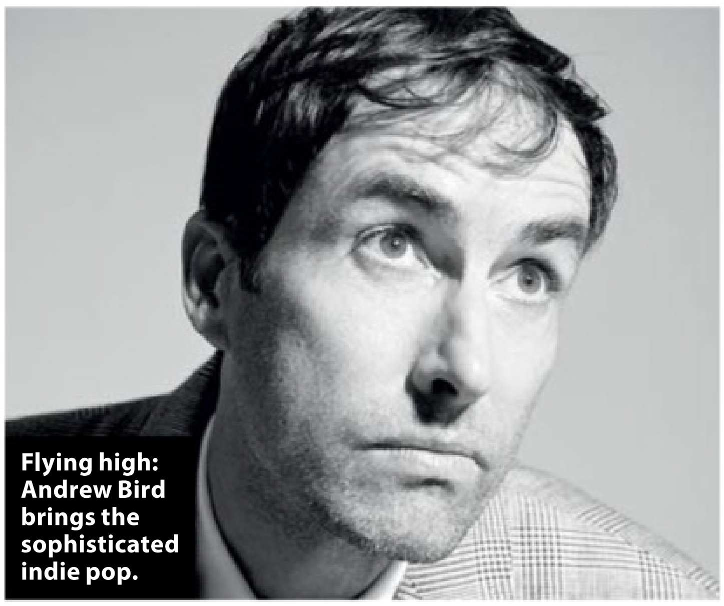
Ink Of The Rosy Morning

TOPIC. CD/DL

Beautifully unadorned and empathetic meeting of folkie minds.

An unlikely pairing perhaps – Savage cut his teeth with The Willows, Sanders spent her teenage years with a travelling family band – but the uncanny understanding between them comfortably overrides and blends the mixed genres of Americana and the English tradition they occupy. Recorded in a remote old schoolhouse by the sea in Hastings, this third album together exudes a natural intimacy that is as heartwarming as it is beguiling. From the Doc Watson mountain song, A Winter's Night, to great British folk standbys like Sweet Nightingale and Lark In The Morning, it sounds like two relaxed musicians sitting in front of the fire spontaneously deciding to play songs they love. Which, it transpires, is exactly what happened. The vocals are gently persuasive, the instrumentation and arrangements subtle and unobtrusive, and the poignant closing track River Don't Run is especially sublime.

Colin Irwin



Flying high: Andrew Bird brings the sophisticated indie pop.

Kiss Diouara

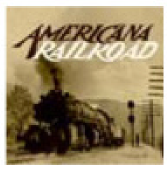
Various

★★★

Americana Railroad

RENEW/BMG. CD/DL/LP

Nineteen songs about trains by various roots/folk artists.



It's been some time since I've listened to a new, themed, multi-artist compilation LP, what with Spotify playlists taking over the game. This one – created and co-produced by Carla Olson, who appears on the opening and closing songs – takes on an evergreen subject in folk, country, blues and gospel: trains. Specifically American trains (with the exception of Graham Nash's Marrakesh Express, warmly covered by Dustbowl Revival) and all that's become associated with them, from the romance of the road to the hope or pain of leaving. All but two songs are covers – Dave Alvin's moving performance of his Southwest Chief is one of the album's highlights – while many of the rest are classics. The best: Peter Case's folky This Train, Paul Burch & Fats Kaplin's easy-going Waiting For A Train, and John Fogerty, in fine form on City Of New Orleans.

Sylvie Simmons

Melody Gardot & Philippe Powell

★★★★

Entre Eux Deux

DECCA. CD/DL/LP

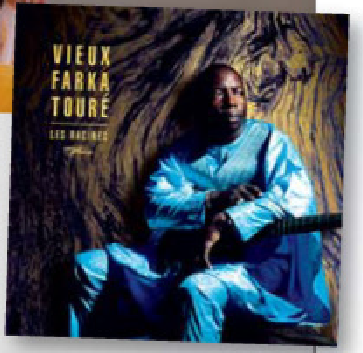
American jazz singer's Parisian love letter.

Born in New Jersey and raised in Philadelphia, Gardot has made Paris her home; she's idolised in France, speaks the language fluently, and earlier this year became a Chevalier of the Ordre des Arts et des Lettres, the country's most prestigious cultural award. It's fitting then that this, her sixth studio LP, is mostly delivered in French. *Entre Eux Deux* is a one-on-one collaboration with the French-born son of the Brazilian bossa nova legend Baden Powell, whose soft, Bill Evans-like piano accompaniment is the perfect backdrop for Gardot's softly sensuous voice. It's an intimate musical encounter whose languorous chansons – ranging from the wistful This Foolish Heart to the more playful Fleurs Du Dimanche – resonate like whispered confessions. Infusing each melody with a tender soulfulness, Gardot has never sounded better.

Charles Waring

WORLD

BY DAVID HUTCHEON



Vieux Farka Touré

★★★★

Les Racines

WORLD CIRCUIT. CD/DL/LP

Proving the fruit doesn't fall far from the tree if given enough time.

So comprehensively does Ali Farka Touré define the Malian interpretation of the blues it was no surprise his son sought to avoid comparisons. Though Ali Farka Touré collaborated on Vieux's eponymous debut, released in 2007, the year after the elder man died, it has been impressive watching Vieux put musical distance between them in the projects he has undertaken since (it was immediately followed by a collection of remixes). But now, having shown what he can do, the prodigal son returns to claim his heritage. Vieux lets his band do a lot of the work: the ceaseless, rolling guitar lines complemented by jagged ngoni riffs, gourd-playing percussionists holding the bottom line steady. The title translates as "the roots", a nod to his dad's classic *The Source* and, like that album, this is pure, unpolished ur-boogie, a foundation course in rock'n'roll.

ALSO RELEASED

OKI

★★★★

Tonkori In The Moonlight

MAIS UM DISCOS. CD/DL/LP

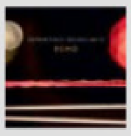
Mixed up folk music from the Ainu people, with the Hokkaido-born tonkori (harp) player OKI heading a bass-heavy outfit. From the whoop near the start of the first track, you can tell this is going to be a whole lot of fun: the melodies are lullaby simple, but the dub sensibility and spacey minimalism means you'll never drift off.

Catrin Finch & Seckou Keita

★★★★

Echo

BENDIGEDIC. CD/DL



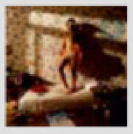
More harps, this time from Wales and West Africa, on the third outing for this dream duo, the cautious blend that comprised their initial meeting now left behind as the pair and their 69-strings (plus an actual string septet) urge each other on to sublime heights. Tunes of hope but also post-lockdown *Echo*-es "of dear ones now departed".

Céu

★★★

Um Gosto De Sol

URBAN JUNGLE. DL/LP



A curious covers album from the Brazilian superstar: her collaborators include Sepultura's Andreas Kisser on guitar and a trio of hip-hop stars, yet nothing prepares you for her straight interpretation of light-entertainment staple Feelings. Better are bossa nova run-throughs of Rita Lee's Chega Mais, Beastie Boys' I Don't Know and Jimi Hendrix's May This Be Love.

Etran De L'Aïr

★★★★

Agadez

SAHEL SOUNDS. CD/DL/LP

What they lack in the guitar heroics of Mdou Moctar, Agadez's latest export make up for in the ferocious danceability that distinguishes Niger's Tuaregs from those further north. No showing off – the solos fit the songs perfectly – just no-nonsense Saharan groove. Only their second album in 27 years (when they started, their leader, Abindi, was nine), but this is great stuff. *DH*

Homeward bound: Mavis Staples and Levon Helm on joyful form in 2011.

Greg McKean (2)

Barnstorming

Mavis met Levon over at his place. **Sylvie Simmons** feels the love on newly released live recording.

Mavis Staples & Levon Helm

★★★★

Carry Me Home

ANTI-. CD/DL/LP

MAVIS STAPLES
LEVON HELM
Carry Me Home

THE FIRST time Mavis and Levon sang together was in 1976 in San Francisco – Mavis was with The Staple Singers, Leon was in The Band and the concert was The Last Waltz. The last time they sang together was in 2011 at a low-key show in a barn in Woodstock. On both occasions they sang The Weight – a song Mavis knew well, having covered it with The Staple Singers in '68 and in her solo shows. It's interesting to play those two performances side by side. The big, powerful Last Waltz version still has that communal singalong quality, in spite of the show being based around the break-up of the band. The main difference on this version is the courage and poignancy of Levon's worn, husky voice as he trades verses with Mavis – the result of years fighting back from cancer of the throat and vocal-cords. The Weight is the last song on this album and the only one where his vocals are as prominent. You can picture him sitting behind his drums, "the best seat in the house" as he always called it, playing along, saving his voice for a blaze of glory at the end.

Carry Me Home was recorded on a warm June night at one of Levon's Midnight Rambles – his ongoing series of intimate homegrown shows with his band and special guests. Helm had modelled the shows on the rural travelling tent shows he saw with his parents as a little kid, except for the travelling part, due to his health. One reason for the shows was to help pay his exorbitant medical bills. A bigger reason (according to daughter Amy Helm, who's on the LP) was to keep him playing and his spirits up.

The 12 songs span a hundred years – soul; gospel; blues; folk; country; civil rights and freedom songs. Staples, having sung other people's material for ever, doesn't interpret a song so much as treat it like it's always been hers to sing. Listen to the authority of her preaching on Dylan's You Got To Serve Somebody. She turns a second Dylan cover, Trouble In My Mind, into a deep, rich blues. This May Be The Last Time – an old spiritual that The Staple Singers recorded in the '50s and the Stones re-imagined in the '60s – is slow and powerful. Mississippi Fred McDowell's You Got To Move – another song the Stones borrowed – has gospel piano and country-soul guitar. And as for pure beauty there's the old hymn Farther Along, sung a cappella, solo, until a choir of backing singers join in. Why this took more than a decade to come out I don't know, but it's worth the wait. Timeless and joyful.

Brandon Coleman

★★★

Interstellar Black Space

BRAINFEEDER. CD/DL/LP

LA keys maestro's future-facing funk is jammed with swaggering, live-sounding amalgams of jazz and soul that nod to Parliament/Funkadelic and Hancock. Coleman's most streamlined funk odyssey yet. *AC*

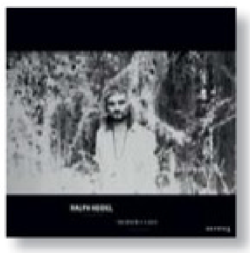
The Good Ones

★★★★

Rwanda

SIX DEGREES. DL

The subtitle: "You see ghosts, I see sky", hints at this Rwandan trio's capacity to write about hope, as well as first-person accounts of hardship suffered since the 1994 genocide. My Chubby Baby, Please Sleep, sounds like Johnny Flynn's Detectorists theme. *JB*



Ralph Heidel

★★★★

Modern Life

KRYPTOX. DL/LP

Loosely configured around piano and alto sax, this Berlin-based multi-instrumentalist's austere orchestrations betray a delicate touch, be it the sad sweeping strings of Wenn Ich Wach Werde or the late-Radiohead loops and glitchy samples of Admiring. *AC*

Iamamiwhoami

★★★

Be Here Soon

TWIMC. DL

Jonna Lee's Swedish collective return with an audio-visual LP inspired by impending parenthood, a sentiment as relatable as the LP's dreamy, folky, electro-pop melodies. The visuals (snowscapes, mirrors, dancing wolves) are contrastingly opaque. *JB*

XAM Duo

★★★★

XAM Duo II

SONIC CATHEDRAL. CD/DL/LP

Sixty minutes of top-quality retro techno ambience and high-tech jazz from Matthew Benn and Christopher Duffin. Starts with the full analogue bubble bath immersion of Blue Comet, and peaks with the effervescent jazz of closing track Cold Stones. *JB*

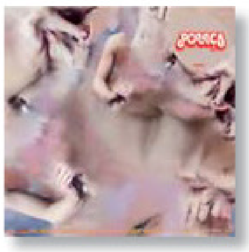
Lullahush

★★★

A City Made Of Water And Small Love

LULLAHUSH. DL

The Dublin poet/producer's slow builds and subtle surrealisms arrive above layered, minimal collages of bells, skew-whiff beats and found sounds. Its anything-goes sonics are smoothed out by engaging wordplay. *AC*



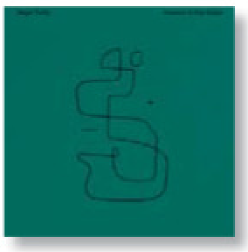
Poliça

★★★

Madness

MEMPHIS INDUSTRIES. CD/DL/LP

The follow-up to 2020's *When We Stay Alive* continues that LP's fragile introspection. Channy Leaneagh sings about grief and endurance, her stained-glass voice the centrepiece of Ryan Olson's sculpted electronics. Standout Blood contains traces of Portishead. *JB*



Vega Trails

★★★★

Tremors In The Static

GONDWANA. CD/DL/LP

Space is the place on this stripped-back duet between Portico Quartet bassist Milo Fitzpatrick and Mammal Hands' saxophonist Jordan Smart. A deep dig where every note counts, Spiral Slow and Epic Dream trace sparse, airy vistas laced with bold melodies. *AC*

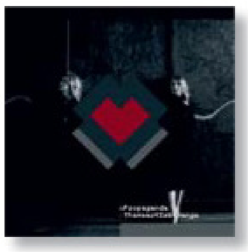
Yama Warashi

★★★★

Crispy Moon

PRAH RECORDINGS. DL/LP

Yoshino Shigihara's third LP with Warashi builds on its forerunner's meld of flexible vocals, criss-crossing organs, careening basslines and unhinged horns. Here, psych meets free jazz, then veers into lilting folk and mangles into individualistic dreampop. *AC*



xPropaganda

★★★★

The Heart Is Strange

ZTT. CD/DL/LP

Propaganda singers Claudia Brücken and Susanne Freytag reconvene with producer Steve Lipson for a sequel to '85 classic *A Secret Wish*. With an excess of dramatic noir-pop and hi-def period-audio polish, consider the essence recaptured. *IH*

FOLLOW YOUR HEART

Michael Franti & Spearhead

★★

Follow Your Heart

THIRTY TIGERS. CD/DL/LP

Beatnigs fans are reminded that angry, art-rock Franti is now a yoga retreat-hosting, inspirational pop wellness guru. The feel here is of unstinting human positivity, on songs such as Life Is Amazing. Sweetly prosaic. *CP*

Sinead O'Brien

★★★

Time Bend And Break The Bower

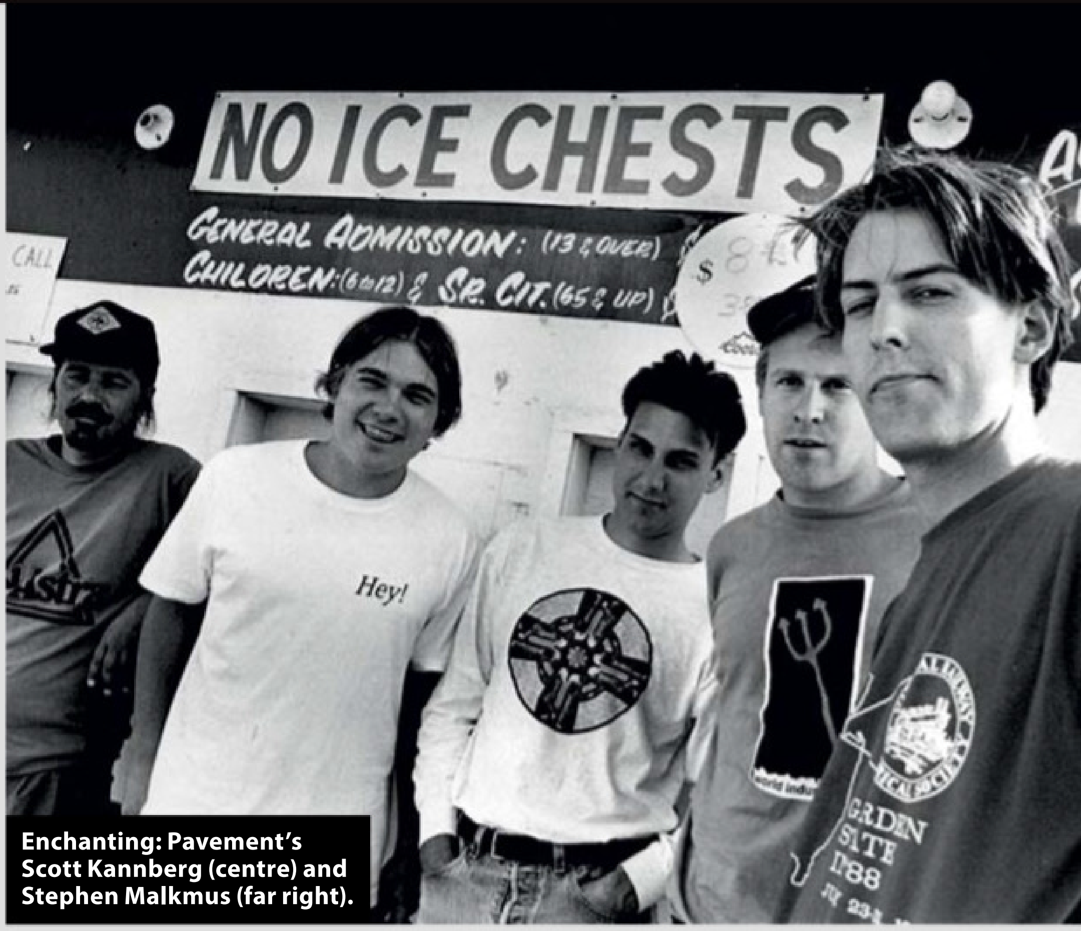
CHESS CLUB. CD/DL/LP

'Edgy' visuals and fashion tie-ins distract from this debut's significant musical interest. In Irish *sprechgesang*, O'Brien prowls around angular guitar and drums. Imagine a Kim Gordon-fronted PiL. *JB*

EXTENDED PLAY

Electricity And Lust

Matador's **Revisionist History** podcast (Spotify) hooks-up Matt Sweeney (Chavez et al) with Pavement's Scott 'Spiral Stairs' Kannberg and Stephen Malkmus for the 30th anniversary of their debut, *Slanted And Enchanted*. Fingerprint analysis of the songs reveals that Malkmus wrote the chords to In The Mouth A Desert on his teeth while walking home to Hoboken after Cop Shoot Cop's Jim Coleman had given him mescaline. Memories of their "suburban striver" days include Hoboken's Pier Platters Records, where $100 could buy a Sonic Youth 7-inch single containing Thurston Moore's hair. Further ruminations on Vanilla Ice, David Berman, post-modern philosophy, weed and overdubs fill 95 minutes. Stray Cats drummer Slim Jim Phantom is contrastingly brisk in **Rockabilly Confidential** (Spotify). Under-20-minute episodes of anecdotes interspersed with songs: season two includes Jim's pal Harry Dean Stanton (Dylan showed him how to play I'll Be Your Baby Tonight) and historic US TV show American Bandstand. Also in its second series is Atlantic Records' **Rock & Roll High School**, hosted by president of A&R Pete Ganbarg. The latest episode features music industry legend Clive Davis. It's predictably 'biz' focused, with much name-dropping alongside Davis's uniquely valuable personal insight. Previous interviewees include Sam Moore, Kathy Valentine, Tony Visconti and Todd Rundgren.


NO ICE CHESTS
GENERAL ADMISSION: (13 & OVER)
CHILDREN: (6 to 12) & SR. CIT. (65 & UP)
Hey!

Enchanting: Pavement's Scott Kannberg (centre) and Stephen Malkmus (far right).

Jungle warfare

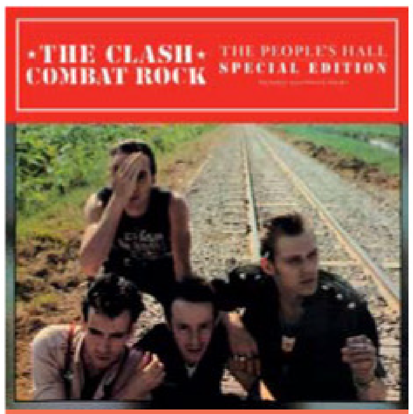
It's early 1982, Mick wants a funky double, Topper's off his nut and Joe's about to do a bunk. Herald the valedictory *Combat Rock*, now with extras. By **Pat Gilbert**.

The Clash

★★★★★

Combat Rock/The People's Hall

SONY. CD/DL/LP



"The classic line-up ended on a high."

THEY SAY A week is a long time in politics, but in the world of The Clash it could be an eternity. Take the seven days commencing May 14, 1982, the date *Combat Rock*, the group's fifth album, was released. At the time, singer Joe Strummer was AWOL, having dramatically vanished three weeks previously on the eve of a UK tour. His disappearance generated grave concern – and chaos – but on May 17, thanks to the efforts of band aide Kosmo Vinyl and a private detective, he was finally discovered hiding out in Paris. The following day he was back in London and just 48 hours after that, on May 20, The Clash headlined a festival in Holland. Yet that very night, their gifted drummer of five years, Topper Headon, was sensationally sacked for his drug addictions. Joe's bunk had not been unrelated.

While these dramas unfolded, *Combat Rock* was climbing the charts. Over the next six months, the record would become a Top 10 hit on both sides of the Atlantic, selling a million copies and, paradoxically, making The Clash's troubles even worse, as they tried desperately to square their newfound wealth and success with being, at heart, an anti-materialistic rebel punk band. Indeed, if you were looking for scapegoats for The Clash's downfall, *Combat Rock* might rank high on the list – not least because it wasn't the album at least one of the band – guitarist Mick Jones – wanted released. Which brings us to the one he did want released: the near-mythical *Rat Patrol From Fort Bragg*, which this expanded 40th anniversary reissue takes pains to acknowledge, without actually coughing up the long-awaited goods.

Combat Rock began life in late summer 1981, at a rehearsal place called Ear Studios near Notting Hill, where The Clash had hired the Stones' mobile studio to begin work on a follow-up to 1980's 3-LP *Sandinista!*. It had only been three months since the group's triumphant two-week residency at Bond's Casino in New York made The Clash headline news Stateside, and deepened their interest in rap, hip-hop, graffiti art and, crucially, US current affairs. The depth of The Clash's immersion in American culture was signalled by their autumn single This Is Radio Clash, a funk/rap number promoted by Don Letts's video of them skanking with beatboxes on NYC's streets.

The bonus disc here – called *The People's Hall* after Ear Studios' home on Freston Road, where in 1977 radical local hippies led by actor David Rappaport had declared the Independent Republic of Frestonia – provide a glimpse of those early sessions. There's Midnight To Stevens, Strummer's maudlin salute to *London Calling* producer Guy Stevens (who'd died suddenly that August); previously unreleased demo versions of *Combat Rock*'s Sean Flynn and Know Your Rights, the echo-drenched latter bearing out the song's original debt to Prince Buster's Ten Commandments; and an undocumented instrumental, He Who Dares Or Is Tired, possibly a work-in-progress of *Combat Rock*'s Car Jamming.

That the group felt the need to ditch these recordings and move to Electric Lady in Greenwich Village, where *Sandinista!* had been recorded, has often been attributed to a grumpy Mick Jones wishing to be closer to his girlfriend Ellen Foley. Poor reviews for their London Lyceum shows in October may also have been a factor ("They're so darned cross-cultural," whined NME).

Prophets without honour at home, The Clash spent four weeks at 52 W 8th Street creating songs profoundly inspired by their environment. Still gorged on Apocalypse Now and its narrator Michael Herr's battlefield memoir Dispatches, many of Strummer's fever-dream lyrics alluded to Vietnam: most obviously the epic Straight To Hell, but also Car Jamming, Sean Flynn (named for Errol Flynn's photographer son killed in the war) and Inoculated City.

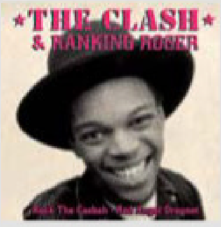
Strummer and bassist Paul Simonon cooked up Red Angel Dragnet, a toast to the NY subway's Guardian Angels with a mid-song monologue delivered in the character of Travis Bickle in Taxi Driver. Atom Tan namechecked Hollywood, while beat poet Allen Ginsberg added a spoken-word section to anti-heroin song Ghetto Defendant. Unlike *Sandinista!*, with its discreet genre pastiches of rockabilly, Motown, disco, rap, dub and jazz, the music on *Combat Rock* was mostly a *sui generis* blend of reggae, funk, world music and Spaghetti Western, given a humid atmosphere by layers of jungle-y percussion, mournful saxophone and piano.

The songs kept flowing; then things went horribly wrong. When Topper flew back to London in mid-December, he was arrested at Heathrow for heroin possession and was never seen in the studio again. Fortunately, he'd pulled a rabbit out of the hat with the piano riff for Rock The Casbah – *Combat Rock*'s big dancefloor smash – but his absence meant it was left to Strummer, Jones and Simonon to fight bitterly over the final track selection and mixes. Mick wanted a funky double album; but the brickbats *Sandinista!* had received for its apparent "musical indulgence" meant everyone else argued a punchy single disc would be better.

Ill-tempered mixing sessions continued amid the group's January/February '82 Far East and Australasian tour, resulting in producer Glyn Johns being tasked with trimming down *Rat Patrol From Fort Bragg* to 12 tracks in his garden studio in Warnford, Surrey. Percussion intros and outros were binned, together with several songs including the jaunty The Beautiful People Are Ugly Too, the unremarkable Idle In Kangaroo Court (AKA Kill Time) and an 11-minute drums-and-piano instrumental titled Walk Evil Talk. Within a week *Combat Rock* as we know it emerged.

History proved Jones's opponents right – not least because Johns' remixed versions of Mick's raunchy rocker Should I Stay Or Should I Go and Rock The Casbah helped propel *Combat Rock* to international glory. But fans have always been frustrated *Rat Patrol* has never officially been released in its entirety – a fact put down to it never having been a group-sanctioned thing in the first place. By way of recompense, *The People's Hall* presents us with The Beautiful People (AKA The Fulham Connection) and Kangaroo Court – though both first surfaced on the 2013 *Sound System* box set – together with B-sides, group collaborator Mikey Dread's Radio One and graffiti artist Futura 2000's eponymous Clash-curated rap. It's an undeniably cool, if not complete, package.

After *Combat Rock*'s release, there would be more long weeks in Clash world, ending with Mick Jones's sacking in August 1983. But the classic line-up ended on a high – with a fascinating, highly original record that's as fresh and relevant today as 40 years ago.



BACK STORY: ROGER AND OUT

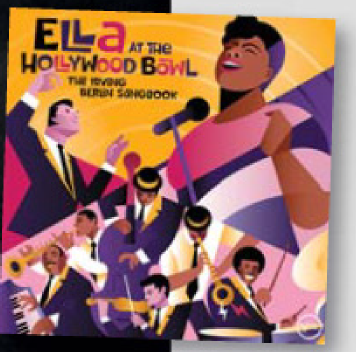
- *Combat Rock/The People's Hall* has a bonus 7-inch/stream featuring The Beat's Ranking Roger toasting over Rock The Casbah and Red Angel Dragnet. The recordings were made at Marcus Studios in Bayswater in early 1983, when, according to a 2011 YouTube comment left by Roger, who died in 2019, "Mick was with me and a couple of engineers. We had the original 24-tracks and took the vocal out. It was not allowed to be let out to anyone, although I gave the late John Peel a copy. You could say it was a demo waiting for approval."

Josh Cheuse

Don't touch that dial: Joe Strummer and Mick Jones at the controls of the good ship Radio Clash.

Ella Fitzgerald: taking Berlin to new heights.

Paul Hoeffler/CTS Images



Ella Fitzgerald

★★★★★

Ella At The Hollywood Bowl: The Irving Berlin Songbook

VERVE/UME. CD/DL/LP.

One 20th century musical giant covers the songs of another.

Choosing 'the greatest' in any endeavour is hard, given that taste is subjective by definition, but it would be hard to argue that there's a more perfect vocalist in American popular music than Ella Fitzgerald. Her pitch, tonal clarity, breath control and phrasing are all flawless – the woman never missed a note. Likewise, the prodigious composer Irving Berlin contributed much of the Great American Songbook. This 1958 Hollywood Bowl concert put the two together and the until now unreleased results are as classic as expected. Ella was a jazz singer and she stamps each tune with her trademark hard swing, so much so that after a particularly raucous Top Hat, White Tie And Tails, she laughs: "Boy, if Irving Berlin could hear that!" Knocking out one Berlin gem after another, Ella is relentlessly magnificent.

Michael Simmons

Trees of the Ages Laura Nyro Live in Japan

Laura Nyro

★★★★

Trees Of The Ages: Live In Japan

OMNIVORE. CD/DL/LP

1994 showcase of Nyro's calmer, spiritual side.

On tour in Japan two years before her cancer diagnosis in 1996 (she died a year later), Laura Nyro's performances suggested the singer had exorcised the agony that fired her often precarious and thrilling high-wire act, stretched between gutsy, symphonic soul, Broadway bravado and singer-songwriter confessional. Likewise, she found a cooler, though no less expressive or ecstatic, vocal register. On this re-titled new edition of a 2003 set originally released only in Japan, Nyro is accompanied by just piano and an all-female harmony trio, crooning like angels with gospel-inspired serenity. The 21-song tracklist acknowledges her R&B pop roots (covers of Ooh Baby Baby and Walk On By), Nyro's own indomitable songwriting legacy (Wedding Bell Blues, Stoned Soul Picnic) and her late-stage feminism (Louise's Church), plus, from those angst-ridden years, only And When I Die and Save The Country, both euphoric examples of her dynamic craft. For a time, at least, she sounded happy.

Martin Aston

Anthony Moore

★★★★

Flying Doesn't Help

DRAG CITY. DL/LP

1979 art-pop solo LP from the Slapp Happy/Henry Cow man remastered and sounding bright and fresh.

When Drag City reissued Anthony Moore's 1976 LP *Out* in 2020, it got buried by Covid chaos; and a lost classic became a little lost all over again. Luckily, it's available again to accompany the re-release of this, his equally special 1979 follow-up. After incorporating lieder and cabaret song-forms on the 1975 Slapp Happy/Henry Cow collaboration *Desperate Straights*, Moore returned to the three-minute pop of his childhood but filtered through interests in minimalism, tape experiments and avant-garde noise. If *Out* pre-empted new wave, *Flying Doesn't Help* embraces it. Wire is a reference point, but so are XTC, John Cale, and the claustrophobic new wave of Robert Fripp's *Exposure*. However, this is no mere bricolage but a thrilling and joyous celebration of songcraft. File this alongside The Adverts' *Cast Of Thousands* as a lost (and now rediscovered) 1979 classic of claustrophobic art-pop romanticism.

Andrew Male

FLYING DOESN'T HELP
A. MOORE

Charles Mingus

★★★★

Mingus Three

RHINO/PARLOPHONE. CD/DL/LP

The latest centenary reissue puts Mingus front and centre in a trio format.

2022 is Charles Mingus' centenary and here's but one of the many releases featuring the work of the bassist-composer-pianist-bandleader to come. This 1957 trio date features him with pianist Hampton Hawes and long-time associate and drummer Dannie Richmond. Eight previously unreleased tracks have been added to the original seven. While Mingus's brawny tone on the bass has never been difficult to discern, the simplicity of three musicians serves to spotlight him. The material ranges from standards (Summertime, I Can't Get Started) to Mingus originals and one group jam. Jerome Kern's Yesterdays opens the proceedings and encapsulates what follows: Mingus's fingers dance and slide around his axe's neck, while Hawes alternates between splendid classical phrasing and slick and quick blue notes. Richmond's brushwork swings and holds the track together.

Michael Simmons

Prince and the Revolution
LIVE

Prince And The Revolution

★★★★

Prince And The Revolution: Live

LEGACY. CD/DL/LP

March 30, 1985 show in Syracuse, NY, gets a polish.

Originally broadcast live via satellite in Europe, then released on VHS later in '85, this 20-song set was effectively Prince's superstar coming-out party: "My name is Prince and I've come to play with you," he lasciviously declares at the outset. Remixed from the original two-inch master tapes for maximum punch and separation, this triple-vinyl/Dolby Atmos reissue sounds great and further reveals the era-oddness of Prince's blending of '80s drum machine funk with late-'60s heavy rock. The Revolution are characteristically well-drilled, but there's real improvisation in balance with the military tightness of the band, and the material expands and contracts to Prince's cues. In this live setting, Take Me With U sounds more like energised country rock, The Beautiful Ones is rendered with screaming emotion and Purple Rain is stretched out to a staggering 18 minutes.

Tom Doyle

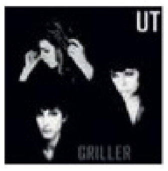
Ut

★★★★

Griller

OUT. CD/DL/LP

Final phase-one missive from the transplanted New Yorkers remains potent.



1989's *Griller* was Ut's last album. It was also their most focused and powerful. Nina Canal, Jacqui Ham and Sally Young arrived in London from New York in 1981 and brought a no wave sensibility to the UK's stages. Bar one track, *Griller* – their second album for Sonic Youth's UK imprint Blast First – was made with Steve Albini behind the mixing desk, and was their first with drummer Charlie Dinsdale. These nine songs pithily encapsulate their essence. Rummy clangs and pushes forwards but is poppy too. Dr No, with Young's violin, is declamatory and gripping. Yet soon after, Ut were no more, until their 2010 reunion. This reissue replicates the original vinyl, while the CD adds tracks from singles and unissued outtake Sharktown.

Kieron Tyler

Various

★★★★

Heroes And Villains: The Sound Of Los Angeles 1965-68

GRAPEFRUIT. CD

Ninety tracks from Sunset Strip heyday over 3-CD set.

HEROES + VILLAINS
LOS ANGELES

Los Angeles was a hotbed of creativity in the mid-to-late '60s, before the LAPD and local businessmen decided to shut down the Sunset Strip. Expertly annotated by David Wells, this entertaining comp provides the big names – The Monkees, Buffalo Springfield, The Byrds, Electric Prunes, Love etc – augmented with plentiful examples of sunshine pop, folk rock, obscure garage rockers and outright mind melters (try Acid Head by the Velvet Illusions, or Michael Blodgett's Fire Engine Sky). It really scores in the thorough research that has turned up early obscurities by later well-knowns: an early version of Sand by Lee Hazlewood and Suzi Jane Hokom, a demo of Windy by its writer Ruthann Friedman (a fascinating story in herself), and an extraordinary early incarnation of Sparks called Urban Renewal Project with a 1967 track called Computer Girl. Add in a stereo mix of Bobby Jameson's incandescent protest Vietnam, and the time machine is set to take you there.

Jon Savage

Love you live: Ronnie Wood and Mick Jagger perform prime-time Stones in 1976.

Getty

Smell the magic

Finally, a Stones live album with blood and guts reveals them in their prime. By **David Fricke**.

The Rolling Stones

★★★★

Live At The El Mocambo

ROLLING STONES/UME. CD/DL/LP

"IT'S LIKE the movies," guitarist Keith Richards said in 2002, summing up The Rolling Stones' history in live albums to that point: mostly routine souvenirs doctored with overdubs and crowd noise, even on the 1969-tour landmark, *Get Yer Ya-Ya's Out*. "Everybody's getting splattered, blood and bones flying about. But it all just sits there on the screen. You can't smell it or taste it."

A notable exception: the four blues and early rock'n'roll covers on side three of 1977's *Love You Live*, pulled from two club shows on March 4 and 5 of that year at Toronto's El Mocambo Tavern. In that short window, the Stones jammed their hockey-rink might into the exuberant crush of a 1963 date at the Station Hotel as if it was their last chance at the dance – which wasn't far from the truth. When the Stones took to the stage, Richards was facing seven years in a Canadian jail after his arrest on drug charges a few days earlier. (He was eventually found guilty and given a suspended sentence.)

Forty-five years later, *Live At The El Mocambo* – the whole of March 5 with some one-off songs from the previous night – is the *Love You Live* we deserved at the time. The Stones careen through a breakneck roulette of that decade's hits, rare-for the-era retrospect (Route 66, the opening track on their 1964 debut LP; a first-in-ages jolt of Let's Spend The Night Together) and the underrated R&B experiments on 1976's *Black And Blue*. The fidelity is claustrophobic and reverb-heavy – and the closest a Stones concert album has come to the French-basement tumult of *Exile On Main St*. The collective fray in Honky Tonk Women, All Down The Line and Dance Little Sister – Mick Jagger railing at the edge of his range through the feral ballet of Richards and Ron Wood's guitars; sideman Billy Preston channelling Johnnie Johnson and Ian Stewart at the piano – sounds like the Stones are still there.

EL MOCAMBO 1977

The immediate future is in the house as well. In addition to the Chess Records homage excerpted for *Love You Live*, the Stones unearth Big Maceo Merriweather's Worried Life Blues, a Chicago nugget from 1941 that Richards and Wood kept for their 1979 setlists with the New Barbarians. And the *Black And Blue* numbers – a jubilant thrashing of Hand Of Fate, the kinetic take on Philly-soul balladry in Fool To Cry – remind you how that album, basically a series of auditions for guitar players until the Stones settled on Wood, points so clearly to the assured funk and dance music on *Some Girls* and *Tattoo You*.

The Stones have never stopped being a club band, going to the small rooms for warm-up gigs and keeping the B stage in their stadium spectacles. But here's some blood and guts from Toronto in the prime-time 1970s. And it doesn't just sit there.

Putting the squeeze on: Astor Piazzolla was a unique, complex artist.

FILE UNDER…

Tango master's breakout

Towards the end of his life, tango giant **Astor Piazzolla** gave it everything he had. By **Jim Irvin**.

ASTOR PIAZZOLLA was a prodigy on the bandoneon, or button accordion. Born in Argentina in 1921 of Italian immigrant parents, he grew up in Greenwich Village and Little Italy, New York, took up the instrument aged eight and composed his first tango aged 11. At 14, he was spotted by tango legend Carlos Gardel, who invited him to tour with his orchestra. Piazzolla was crushed when his father refused permission. Shortly afterwards, the whole Gardel touring party perished in a plane crash. Astor would later joke that, had his father let him go, he'd be playing the harp.

At 17, Piazzolla moved to Buenos Aires and studied under Argentinian classical composer Alberto Ginastera, who taught him orchestration. His Octeto Buenos Aires, formed in 1955, was effectively a chamber orchestra with added bandoneons, but it improvised like a jazz ensemble. This blend of tango, jazz and classical music was dubbed 'nuevo tango' and proved controversial to the point of Piazzolla receiving death threats for daring to tamper with the form. Undaunted, he would experiment with tango for the rest of his life.

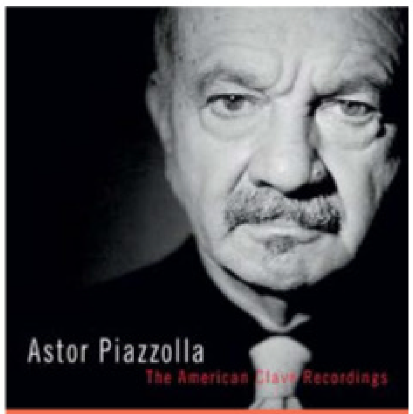
Now Nonesuch Records release a 3-LP/3-CD box set, *Astor Piazzolla: The American Clavé Recordings* ★★★★, gathering a trio of albums originally issued in the 1980s: *Tango: Zero Hour*, *La Camorra*, and *The Rough Dancer And The Cyclical Night (Tango Apasionado)*, the first time they have been available on vinyl since their initial release on American Clavé, the label founded by producer Kip Hanrahan, who writes in the sleevenotes: "I'm not sure whether Astor really loved or hated the tango. I think he loved the music his father surrounded the family with, the sound of what they'd left behind in Argentina… It was the audible identity that made them different from the Italian and Jewish families on the Lower East Side of New York. When I listen to Astor, I'm listening to the music of a turbulent, complex, restless, brilliant man rearranging the vocabulary of his father's dreams."

That impulse to keep challenging stylistic assumptions, constantly tweaking the levels of traditionalism in the form, makes his work rewarding. It ranges from torch songs on rain-lashed streets (check the glorious Five Tango Sensations, commissioned by the Kronos Quartet and released in 1991), to lusty carnivals where cultures clash and passions flare. His music can be cerebral, carnal, playful or intense by turns.

Consequently, these albums have markedly different textures. *Tango: Zero Hour* was recorded with his New Tango Quintet; bandoneon plus guitar, violin, piano and bass. At the time, 1986, Piazzolla declared it "the greatest record I've made in my entire life. We gave our souls to [it]." 1989's *La Camorra*, the most classical of the three, was Piazzolla's last recording with the Quintet. Hanrahan recalls multiple occasions when he'd be fired by this truculent perfectionist, after a flaming row about some aspect of the work, only to have him call early next morning: "Kip, I was thinking…"

The Rough Dancer And The Cyclical Night (Tango Apasionado) grew from music for a theatre piece and was constructed by Hanrahan in a way that echoed Teo Macero's work with Miles Davis, editing and remixing sections of music to create something longer and more narrative, with repeating themes and rough edges. "Imagine a Borges whorehouse," Piazzolla instructed. Shortly after it was completed, Piazzolla suffered a stroke and went into a coma from which he never recovered. He died two years later in 1992, aged 71.

Lavish presentation – Piazzolla's stern gaze out front – and excellent essays by Hanrahan and journalist Fernando González make, on the 30th anniversary of his death, a fine memorial to a unique, complex artist who threw everything into his work and put it before everything else.



> **"Astor had an impulse to keep challenging stylistic assumptions."**

Joel Meyerowitz

Bill Evans Trio

★★★★

The Village Vanguard Sessions

AMERICAN JAZZ CLASSICS. CD

Jazz pianist's landmark early-'60s live recordings resurface.

THE VILLAGE VANGUARD SESSIONS

Influenced by the lush harmonic vocabulary of the classical composers Debussy and Ravel, New Jersey-born Evans revolutionised the sound of the piano in jazz. He knew how to swing but often preferred playing forlorn romantic ballads defined by soft, impressionistic chords; a perfect example of that approach is his achingly dreamy renditions of the jazz standards My Foolish Heart and My Man's Gone Now on this 2-CD set, recorded during the Evans trio's two-week residence in June 1961 at New York's Village Vanguard. It was an engagement that yielded two classic live albums, *Sunday At The Village Vanguard* and *Waltz For Debby*, where Evans, together with bassist Scott LaFaro (who would tragically die in a car crash a few weeks later at the age of 25) and drummer Paul Motian introduced the innovative concept of collective improvisation, which would radically modernise the piano trio in jazz.

Charles Waring

JOHN COLTRANE MY FAVORITE THINGS

John Coltrane

★★★★★

My Favorite Things: 60th Anniversary Edition

RHINO. CD/DL/LP

Iconic jazz album notches up three-score years; now remastered and repackaged.

With his Atlantic debut album, *Giant Steps*, released in 1960, Coltrane took bebop-based improvisation, with its vortices of rapid chord changes, to a stratospheric zenith that's never been equalled in jazz; but the big challenge he faced afterwards was where to go next. He found the answer in modal jazz, where scales rather than chords became the basis for his improvisations, allowing greater creative freedom. The lengthy title track from 1961's *My Favorite Things*, with its mesmeric groove, helped to popularise both the modal style and the overlooked soprano saxophone, making more of a quantum leap for jazz than *Giant Steps*. The rest of the album, released in remastered mono and stereo formats for this reissue, highlights Trane's versatility; from the feverish Summertime and blithely swinging But Not For Me to the gilded bittersweet lyricism of Everytime We Say Goodbye.

Charles Waring

Getty

Lining Time

★★★★

Strike

SHADOW WORLD. DL/LP

Post-punk folk protest through a feminist lens.

Lining Time

Lining Time were co-founded in 1982 by the late New York artist and choreographer Cathy Josefowitz, then a dance theatre student at Dartington College Of Arts in Devon. Like her art, their music was a manifesto for female militancy and their sole album, *Strike*, recorded straight to cassette and self-distributed, is reissued to tie in with The Thinking Body, a retrospective of Josefowitz's artwork. Its consciousness-raising messages – what fellow member Mara De Wit describes as "a call for freedom" – are as relevant in the post-#MeToo world as the Reclaim The Night environment they were written in, but their appeal also lies in the intimacy with which they are delivered. Mostly using just a cappella choral voice with occasional gentle acoustic strumming behind it, their assertions of identity rouse and stir and engage fully.

Lois Wilson

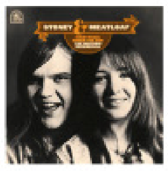
Stoney & Meatloaf

★★★

Everything Under The Sun – The Motown Recordings

REAL GONE MUSIC. CD

1971 sole Motown LP plus singles, outtakes, alternate mixes and Stoney solo sides.



Stoney, AKA Shaun Murphy, and Meatloaf were performing in the Detroit cast of Hair when producers Ralph and Russ Terrana signed the pair to Motown imprint Rare Earth for 1971's *Stoney And Meatloaf*. Rooted in blues rock, chief influence being Delaney & Bonnie – the album's sleeve is a nod to their 1969 *Accept No Substitute* artwork – they were billed as "the new dynamic duo" and on first single What You See Is What You Get, the group's sole US R&B Top 40 hit, you already have the beginnings of Meatloaf's sound – his operatic vocals thunder through the chest-thumping chorus. Stoney, meanwhile, matches his vocal power throughout, her sassy shout defining their cover of Ike and Tina Turner's Game Of Love, which provides this 2-CD set's highpoint.

Lois Wilson

The reel thing: Robert Fripp in 1981, now the "doyen of the deep-dive multi-disc box set."

The guitarist's solo musical explorations away from King Crimson documented over 32 discs. By **John Bungey.**

Robert Fripp

★★★★

Exposures 1977-1983

DGM/PANEGYRIC. CD+BR+DVD

WHILE SOME artists are known as masters of the three-minute single, Robert Fripp has become the doyen of the deep-dive multi-disc box set. Sets such as *Thrak Box*, *The Road To Red* and *1969* have documented in exhaustive, occasionally exhausting, detail the long-ago doings of the adventurous, virtuosic and slightly uptight musicians who have laboured under the banner of his band, King Crimson.

Now Fripp's archaeology unit turn their attention to the guitarist's solo work created in and around one of Crimson's regular interregnums. Three DVDs, four Blu-Ray audio discs and 25 CDs document the angelic shimmerings of his patented Frippertronics, three solo LPs and the self-described "second-division new wave dance band" The League Of Gentlemen. Outtakes, remixes, rarities and the occasional unreleased track will call to the completist's wallet.

The key work is Fripp's first solo album, the ground-breaking and sometimes stunning *Exposure*. "Solo album" is in fact a misnomer for an artist whose best music generally comes in collaborations. Here, Peter Gabriel, Phil Collins, Peter Hammill and Daryl Hall all feature on songs that veer between sublime balladry and hairy avant-rock. In between come odd snatches of conversation and Frippian guitar. The abrupt changes of mood and dynamics sometimes make for a jarring listen but there are moments of brilliance, with Gabriel's Here Comes The Flood and attendant Frippertronics forming a stunning closing suite.

The music is presented here in multiple mixes and includes the album as originally planned, with much more of Daryl Hall's voice – his management objected, fearing it might hinder the ascent of Hall & Oates' chart-friendly grooves. Certainly, having one main vocalist gives *Exposure* greater coherence. The outtakes don't add a lot to the story.

There are sonorous Frippertronics on solo album No. 2, *God Save The Queen/Under Heavy Manners*, and a typically fidgety vocal from David Byrne as Fripp tries out "discotronics" over a motorik beat. It's back to ethereal guitar moodscapes on LP No. 3, *Let The Power Fall*.

The League Of Gentlemen are a lot of fun. If the quartet had a couple of B-52's singing over the top, they could really have been onto something. Tunes such as Trap are remarkably eloquent for what was a short-lived road band and hint at King Crimson to come. Live tracks and outtakes offer more of the same.

Elsewhere comes a vast disgorging of Frippertronics, live and in the studio (68 hours on the Blu-Rays!). Some are dramatic and densely detailed, others, however carefully conceived, coalesce into affable ambient ear balm.

As Fripp has said in the past, no one is forcing anyone to buy such a head-bogglingly encyclopaedic test of loyalty – and, musically, there is little new in this beautifully presented doorstopper that super-fans really need. That, of course, will in no way stop them getting in their order.

Robert Fripp Exposure

Barbara Keith

★★★★

Barbara Keith

MAPACHE. DL/LP

Greenwich Village folk singer's unloved second LP rediscovered as a small country-rock masterpiece.

Barbara Keith hated this record. After her 1969 folk-country solo debut flopped, the New England singer relocated to LA and recorded this follow-up with a crack band that included Spooner Oldham on keyboards, Lowell George on guitar, Jim Gordon on drums and Sneaky Pete Kleinow on pedal steel. If you're familiar with her name it might be via her urgent, country-funk cover of Dylan's All Along The Watchtower. Yet, however great that track is, it's deceptive. This is a record of proto-California country rock. The sound is warm, soulful, and just a little desolate. Keith's voice, like a US Sandy Denny, is drenched in melancholic longing, while her self-penned songs such as Free The People, The Bramble And The Rose and Detroit Or Buffalo all possess a kind of euphoric sadness where hope meets despair. Keith heard it, gave back the Reprise advance and quit. The album was withdrawn. It feels so good to have it back.

Andrew Male

Darlene Love

★★★

The Many Sides Of Love: The Complete Reprise Recordings Plus!

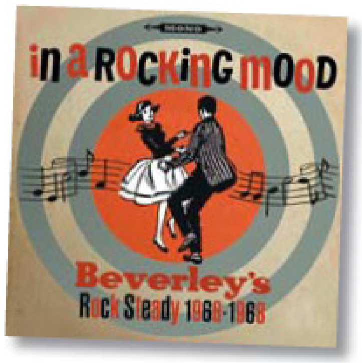
REAL GONE MUSIC. CD/DL/LP

Cherry pick of Blossoms and solo recordings spanning 1963 to 2014.

DARLENE LOVE

A Los Angeles minister's daughter, Darlene Love sung in local churches before founding The Blossoms in 1957. They recorded singles for a variety of labels, including five for Reprise which make up just over half of this compilation. One of those, What Are We Gonna Do In '64?, was recorded under the name The Wildcats for Lee Hazlewood and is more shrill and feral sounding than the rest which are rooted in soul. The best is 1965's ebullient Van McCoy-penned That's When The Tears Start. The three solo sides from 1966, '85 and '90 respectively and a 2014 duet with Bette Midler on He's Sure The Boy I Love – Darlene voiced The Crystals' original in 1962 when she was *the* go-to singer for Phil Spector – are less satisfying, although Love's voice endures.

Lois Wilson



Various

★★★★

In A Rocking Mood: Ska, Rock Steady And Reggay From Beverley's 1966-1968

DOCTOR BIRD. CD/DL

Rare rock steady from Leslie Kong plus sax instrumentals by Roland Alphonso.

Chinese-Jamaican businessman Leslie Kong began producing ska after being approached by Jimmy Cliff, and reached his stride through sensational reggae hits by Desmond Dekker and the Maytals, but also produced exceptional rock steady, much of which has remained unjustly obscure. The Rio Grandes, Winston & George and The Spanishtonians are largely forgotten today, yet their rock steady gems are ripe for rediscovery. Raw early work by Norman Grant of the Twinkle Brothers, future Upsetters keyboardist Glen Adams and future Pioneers member George Dekker are all instructive, the latter's You Treating Me Bad an outstanding treat, and there are alternate takes of a few tracks, straight from the master tapes. A bonus disc of Roland Alphonso saxophone instrumentals dates from the early reggae phase showing that songs like El Toro and Middle East have lost none of their power to thrill.

David Katz.

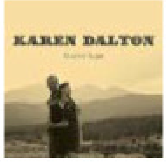
Karen Dalton

★★★★

Shuckin' Sugar

DELMORE RECORDING SOCIETY. CD/DL

Early Karen Dalton in pure folk milieu.



Few have made the leap from anonymity to posthumous legend as dramatically as Karen Dalton. In the almost 30 years since her death, after several collections, tributes and a documentary, she's accumulated a dedicated fanbase. This latest release features her live, primarily at a Colorado coffeehouse, solo and with then-husband, singer-guitarist Richard Tucker. Her trademark 12-string and banjo are here, as is that voice that's beguiled many who weren't yet born when she died, a little rawer than it got later. True believers will be delighted with several tunes never previously heard performed by her: reefer anthem If You're A Viper, country-blues classic In The Pines and the Blind Lemon Jefferson title track. While most are traditional and she's in a folk milieu, Dalton transcended these labels, never sounding as if she were singing for audiences, but for her life.

Michael Simmons

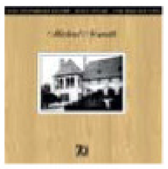
Michael Nesmith

★★★★

And The Hits Just Keep On Comin'

7A. CD

Celebrating 50 years, Nez's 1972 fifth album, a solo career highpoint.



When RCA requested an album of pop hits from the former Monkee, Michael Nesmith responded with this wryly titled set of beautiful, sad, world-weary songs. Mostly written before or during his tenure with The Monkees, they were recorded swiftly, with Papa Nez producing and accompanying himself on 12-string and his collaborator Orville J 'Red' Rhodes joining on pedal steel. His version of Different Drum, a song he wrote in 1964 and which hit in '67 for Stone Poneys and was also covered successfully by The Lemonheads, is disdainful sparing folk blues. The remainder is more typical Nez country rock, peaking with the affecting Two Different Roads, first recorded by Mary McCaslin in '67 but in its definitive form here, and the bleak poetic then-new song Tomorrow And Me.

Lois Wilson

Various

★★★★

We Are The Children Of The Sun

BBE. CD/DL/LP

Eighty minutes of blissful summer sounds, gathered from the farthest corners of our music landscape.

Paul Hillery first began seeking out obscure, trippy '70s soft rock, and groovy AOR in the late '80s; anything that exuded a mood of soulful relaxation. Using the compilation as a way to battle his own depression, Hillery has created one of the most emotionally uplifting and hazily beautiful comps of recent years. This is music sourced from Disney Theme Park musicians (Michael Welch's eerie synth noir instrumental Phone Home), Caribbean cruise souvenir LPs (Marla Fant's lonesome soft-folk ballad, Land Of Wonder), and Canadian radio talent shows (the unnerving Quaalude soul of Scott McGregor Moore' So Good When It Comes). Standouts include Canadian singer-songwriter Philip John Lewin's jazz-soul critique of Erica Jong, Fear Of Flying, and the blissful Flow, a 1973 slice of late CSN psych from Laguna Beach acid dropouts Gabriel Gladstar. But nothing here is bad and everything will put a beatific smile on your face. That feels very important right now.

Andrew Male

Give them their duets: Nancy calls Lee for another faultless team-up.

Photo by David Sutton, Courtesy of the David Sutton Collection

Lee Hazlewood & Nancy Sinatra

★★★★

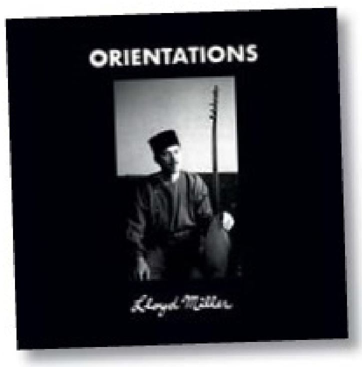
Nancy & Lee

LIGHT IN THE ATTIC. CD/DL/LP/MC

The first of their three duets albums.

After masterminding These Boots Are Made For Walkin' in 1965 and hitting duet gold with her on Some Velvet Morning two years later, Lee Hazlewood's next move was an album of duets with Nancy Sinatra. This being the '60s, albums were still afterthoughts, so Hazlewood simply padded out the tracklisting by revisiting material he'd recorded with former amour Suzi Jane Hokom and adding Sand, Jackson and Summer Wine, their collaborations on recent Sinatra albums. For all its jerry-built provenance, this shotgun marriage of off-piste Hazlewood-penned originals and outside efforts such as You've Lost That Lovin' Feelin' and Ray Davies' Tired Of Waiting For You (one of two extra tracks here) worked splendidly. His raised-eyebrow growl and her straighter, more tender tones meshed faultlessly against a lavishly arranged backdrop, not least on Elusive Dreams, which Elvis Presley spent a whole night analysing with Sinatra at Graceland.

John Aizlewood



Lloyd Miller

★★★★

Orientations

FOUNTAINAVM. LP

Rare tracks, 1960-2021, from an Iran-facing outlier of spiritual jazz.

Western musicians can sometimes sound dilettante-ish when they dabble in Eastern musics, not least when they do so under the cover of spiritual jazz. It's tough, though, to dismiss the bona fides of the multi-instrumentalist Dr Lloyd Miller, whose cultural immersion involved living for many years in Iran, even becoming a TV presenter there. *Orientations* collects a deep range of his musical adventures over the past 50-odd years, as he finds ever more inventive ways to fuse jazz with the traditions of the Middle- and near-East. Sometimes, the fusion is superficial: Summer Thyme In Tehran is essentially a straight, nice enough version of Gershwin's Summertime, with an exoticised title. Elsewhere, though, the hybridising is deeper: Improv In Isfahan, a heady mix of Persian folk, cosmic drone, New Age synths, and Miller's Bill Evans-ish piano, is astonishing. "It sounds pretty hip," someone notes during a 1963 rehearsal of Pentakarnatica; they're not wrong.

John Mulvey

THE MILES DAVIS QUINTET
RELAXIN' WITH THE MILES DAVIS QUINTET

The Miles Davis Quintet

★★★★

Relaxin'

CRAFT SMALL BATCH. LP

Limited, cloth-bound hi-fidelity edition of an early Miles highpoint.

Two days in 1956 produced four classic Prestige albums – *Cookin'*, *Relaxin'*, *Workin'* and *Steamin'* – capturing the Miles Davis Quintet achieving an uncanny level of unity at a hard-bop peak, a marked but attractive contrast audible between the soloing styles of Davis, who blows smoke rings, and John Coltrane, who spits embers. All four albums are equally cherished, but this one's been granted a swanky, deluxe limited edition, remastered from original tapes and using the RTI one-step process that removes two stages of potential deterioration before creating a vinyl stamper. The result is an admirably loud, clear cut that leaps into 3D from an above-basic stereo, but, on our review copy, appears to occasionally distort Miles's famously piercing, mute-deploying tone on opener If I Were A Bell. The rest, however, sounds just as warm and forward as nature intended.

Jim Irvin

Various

★★★★

If Music Presents You Need This!: An Introduction To Enja Records

BBE. DL/LP

Four-disc précis of the Munich jazz label more people need to know about.

The great jazz labels: Blue Note, Impulse, Verve, ECM… now make room on your shelf for this quietly ground-breaking German label, formed by Munich jazz obsessives Matthias Winckelmann and Horst Weber in 1971. A knowledge of the secondhand vinyl market will tell you Enja LPs, even by Don Cherry, Pharoah Sanders and Eric Dolphy, still go for around a tenner. That's likely to change with If Music founder Jean-Claude's brilliant, eclectic compilation. From the haunting spiritual jazz flights of American flautist Marc Levin, via Bobby Hutcherson's live motorik rendition of The Creators (from 1973's essential *Live At The Festival* comp), to the bump, roll and wail of Prince Lasha's Kwadwo Safari, this is music that perfectly illustrates Enja's visionary aesthetic, a sound that brings together free and spiritual jazz with Eastern and African influences and points the way to the '80s "world music" cultural shift with style, élan and raw fire.

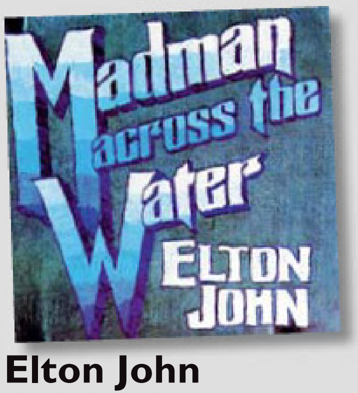
Andrew Male

COMING NEXT MONTH…

Black Midi, Amy Winehouse, Gwenno (pictured), Small Faces, Ty Segall, Interpol, Patty Griffin, Laura Veirs, Christine McVie, ZZ Top and more.

Sophie Hur

REISSUES EXTRA



Elton John

★★★★★

Madman Across The Water

UMC/EMI. CD/LP

Multi-format anniversary for Elton and Bernie's second intricate 1971 pop travelogue around mythic America. Extras on the 4-LP and CD box sets include piano demos, BBC Sounds For Saturday concert, the Mick Ronson-featuring original of the title track and more. *JB*

THE KILLS
NO WOW

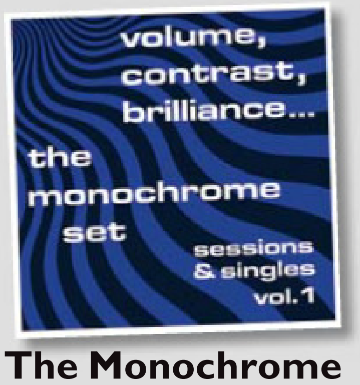
The Kills

★★★★

No Wow

DOMINO. CD/DL/LP

Black Keys/Fiona Apple producer Tchad Blake remixes the Anglo-American art-trash duo's 2005 album for this two-disc deluxe ed. More a subtle tweak than a major facelift, their second LP retains its elegantly crumpled appeal; like Suicide in vintage designer denim on stand-out The Good Ones. *JB*



The Monochrome Set

★★★★

Volume, Contrast, Brilliance…

OPTIC NERVE. DL/LP

Reborn on splattery-vinyl, a 1983 comp subtitled 'Sessions & Singles Vol. 1': imagine the house band from The Village in The Prisoner playing sophisto-acid drop pop of admirable unnaturalness. *IH*

Sex Pistols

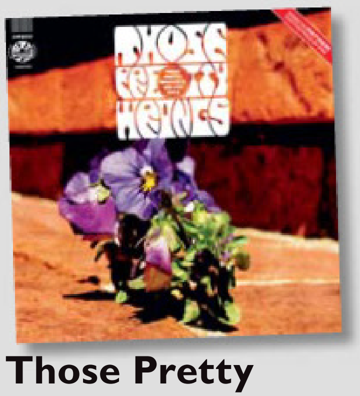
Sex Pistols

★★★★★

The Original Recordings

UMC. CD/LP/MC

Released to coincide with Steve Jones's mini-series Pistol, this 20-track comp has the unenviable job of choosing what *not* to include: all key stonkers are present, while democracy reigns with *Swindle* vocal cuts by Jones, Vicious and, cripes, Cook (his Silly Thing). *PG*



Those Pretty Wrongs

★★★

Those Pretty Wrongs/Zed For Zulu

CURATION. CD/DL/LP

Both albums by Jody Stephens and The Freewheelers' Luther Russell, who formed TPW around 2012's Big Star doc. Their sound owes Jody's alma mater: songs are simple, melodic, sepia-tinged and reflective, foregrounding Jody's heart-on-sleeve vocals. *JB*

Various

★★★★

Boom! Italian Jazz Soundtracks At Their Finest (1959-1969)

CAMSUGAR. CD/DL/LP

Thirty-three film cues, some unreleased, by Morricone, Bruno Nicolai, Piero Piccioni and others. Soundtracking comedy, romance, *giallo* and more via impeccable cine-jazz. Listen for Italian-speaker/jailbird Chet Baker on Piero Umiliani's Tensione. *IH*

Lovers Rock
THE SOULFUL SOUND OF ROMANTIC REGGAE

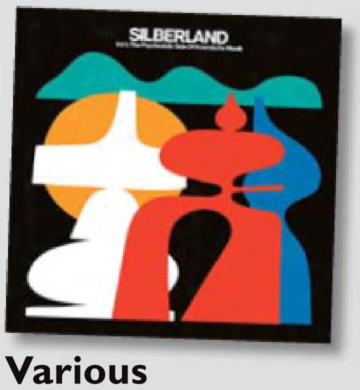
Various

★★★★

Lovers Rock

TROJAN. CD/DL/LP

Subtitled: The Soulful Sound Of Romantic Reggae, a 2-LP or 3-CD set of golden age lovers in '70s/'80s Britain and JA, where soul met roots and women's voices dominated. Inevitably, there is overlap with 2015's *Trojan Lovers Rock* (eg, Louisa Marks' influential Caught You In A Lie) but much more besides. *JB*



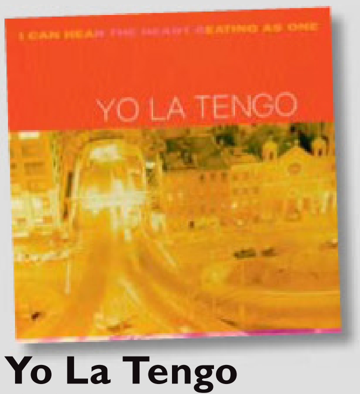
Various

★★★★

Silberland Vol 1: The Psychedelic Side of Kosmische Musik

BUREAU B. CD/DL/LP

Twenty '72-86 nuggets prove the urge to trip out survived longer in West Germany: inner-space proto-techno, astral drift and Deutsche-dub from the known (Phantom Band, Cluster) to the less so (Michael Bundt, Populäre Mechanik). Ausgezeichnet! *IH*



Yo La Tengo

★★★★★

I Can Hear The Heart Beating As One

MATADOR. DL/LP

MOJO's How To Buy Yo La Tengo Number 1, this kaleidoscopic eighth album remains the best entry point to the NJ indie rock MVPs. A 25th anniversary package further enhances its dreamrock-to-Bebop vibe, with a '97 Peel session and some elite remixes (Kevin Shields, Tortoise). *JM*

RATINGS & FORMATS

Your guide to the month's best music is now even more definitive with our handy format guide.

CD COMPACT DISC DL DOWNLOAD ST STREAMING LP VINYL
MC CASSETTE DVD DIGITAL VIDEO DISC C IN CINEMAS BR BLU-RAY

★★★★★ MOJO CLASSIC
★★★★ EXCELLENT
★★★ GOOD
★★ DISAPPOINTING
★ BEST AVOIDED
☆ DEPLORABLE

Holding out for a superhero: Daryl 'Captain Sky' Cameron – intergalactic funk traveller – in 1979.

Firmament Record

This month's totem of power for the worthy – Chicago future-funk faster than a speeding bullet.

Captain Sky

The Adventures Of Captain Sky

AVI, 1978

CREDITS

Tracks: Saturday Night Move-Ease/ Super Sporm/Now That I Have You/ Wonder Worm/Can't Stop Now

Personnel: Daryl Cameron (vocals, handclaps), Larry Kimpel (bass), Ed Gosa (drums), Alan Burroughs (guitar), Reggie Boyd Jr (guitar), Donald Burnside (keyboards), Sheryl Sawyer (backing vocals, handclaps), David Murray (handclaps), Dwayne Murray (handclaps), Neena L Williams (handclaps)

Producer: Daryl Cameron

Released: 1978

Recorded: Pumpkin Recording Studio

Current availability: Spotify

AT SPIRITED US indie AVI Records, Liberace wasn't the only cape-wearing artiste promoting a larger-than-life fantasy in 1978. Daryl Cameron, a singer, writer, producer and arranger from southside Chicago, had also joined the LA-based label's roster. He had, he said, "entered the phone booth of his mind," and emerged in comic book costume to become his crime-fighting alter-ego Captain Sky.

"There weren't enough black superheroes back then," the 64-year-old tells MOJO today. "So Captain Sky came to the rescue!"

Born in 1957, Cameron's first loves were Batman and James Brown. He first saw the latter perform live at Chicago's Soldier Field football stadium when he was 13. "I was sat right at the front and I couldn't believe my eyes and ears," he says rhapsodically. "Here was the roots of funk, everything grew from it, George Clinton, Bootsy Collins, the Ohio Players, I mean *everything*."

The same year he got his first guitar and learnt by playing along to the R&B sounds he heard on radio station WVON, before honing his craft in a series of soul outfits – "the Bionic Band, Southside Movement… we never recorded but we were popular in the city, at the clubs and block parties."

In early 1978 he hooked up with Eddie Thomas, Curtis Mayfield's former partner at Curtom. "[Daryl] had his own very distinct ideas about what he wanted to do as a solo artist," Thomas said in 2020. "He was very community minded. He wanted to put Chicago on the funk map."

"I told him about my Captain Sky concept, how he was a musical hero that people could look up to and be proud of," says Cameron. "'Captain' because he stands for authority – whatever I came up with had to have a power and punch to it – and 'Sky', because of the unlimited possibilities out there. He said, 'I think you've got a hit son.'"

The five songs that make up his debut, *The Adventures Of…*, were written in his bedroom and sketched out from the basslines upwards. Rehearsals, he says, were "focused. I was dedicated. I wanted everything worked out before going into the studio. Finding the right musicians was key to getting it done right. They were phenomenal players, they knew exactly what they needed to do and they put all their personality into the music."

Thomas, meanwhile, signed Cameron to AVI and, with his parents footing the $5,000 studio bill, Cameron holed up in former American Breed singer Gary Loizzo's Pumpkin Recording Studios. Cameron remembers it being made at home in the intimate, small space, which was essentially Loizzo's garage. They recorded piecemeal over eight weeks, as his group pledged allegiance to the funk aesthetic with technically precise but appealingly loose extended jams. The centrepieces, Super Sporm and Wonder Worm, were both super-energised pieces executed with maximum *joie de vivre*. The former is an explosive 13-minute-plus blast of intergalactic groove, sweet and sticky bass, bubbling synth and cheeky innuendo: it grew, says Cameron, from two colliding dance moves popular in the clubs: "half the Spank, half the Worm – hence, the Sporm!"

Meanwhile, Wonder Worm is a pulsating space odyssey with rubberised vocals which starred a wriggling invertebrate with extraterrestrial powers. Cameron, dressed up in white jumpsuit and tasselled cape and wielding a circular silver shield, performed it on US TV music show Soul Train in 1979. "You knew you'd made it when [host] Don Cornelius invited you to perform," he says. "It was a cosmic experience."

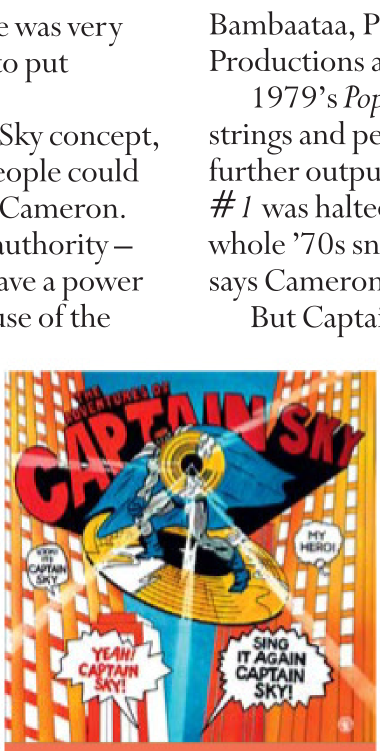
The album cover for *The Adventures Of…* is suitably cosmic too, featuring an illustration devised by Cameron of Captain Sky flying above the Chicago skyline on a gold record. *The Adventures…* never made gold status, but to Cameron's satisfaction, it did reach Number 30 in the US black music chart. "That meant my message of love and empowerment was getting out there on to the street," he says. His futuristic Afro-funk groove also had a considerable impact on early hip-hop, earning him a shout-out on the Sugar Hill Gang's landmark Rapper's Delight: his sounds would later be sampled by Afrika Bambaataa, Public Enemy, Boogie Down Productions and more.

1979's *Pop Goes The Captain* added horns, strings and percussion to the mix, though further output after 1980's *Concerned Party #1* was halted through drug misuse. "That whole '70s snowstorm caught up with me," says Cameron.

But Captain Sky would soar again. Cameron later got clean and began working as a recovery support specialist at a Chicago hospital. He also set up his own not-for-profit mentoring and leadership programme for at-risk African-American men. Now he's preparing a series of remastered reissues to accompany 2020's comeback, *The Whole 9*. "I see it as giving back," he says. "I'm still touched by how many people I connected with and inspired, and I want to make people feel good about themselves. Captain Sky gave me that power. I'm passing it on."

Lois Wilson

Thanks to Aaron Cohen


THE ADVENTURES OF
CAPTAIN SKY
MY HERO!
YEAH! CAPTAIN SKY!
SING IT AGAIN CAPTAIN SKY!

> "There weren't enough black superheroes back then."
>
> DARYL 'CAPTAIN SKY' CAMERON

Courtesy of Captain Sky Cre8tive Conceptz LLC/Daryl Cameron

SJM CONCERTS & DFC BY ARRANGEMENT WITH 13 ARTISTS PRESENTS

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THU 29 SEPTEMBER
NEWCASTLE
O2 CITY HALL

FRI 30 SEPTEMBER
MANCHESTER
O2 VICTORIA WAREHOUSE

SAT 01 OCTOBER
LIVERPOOL
UNI MOUNTFORD HALL

MON 03 OCTOBER
BIRMINGHAM
O2 ACADEMY

TUE 04 OCTOBER
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UK TOUR JUNE 2022

12 **NEWCASTLE** THE CLUNY
13 **GLASGOW** ST LUKE'S
14 **LEEDS** BRUDENELL SOCIAL CLUB
15 **MANCHESTER** THE DEAF INSTITUTE
16 **HEBDEN BRIDGE** THE TRADES CLUB
18 **NOTTINGHAM** THE BODEGA
19 **BIRMINGHAM** THE ACTRESS & BISHOP
20 **BRISTOL** THE LOUISIANA
21 **PORTSMOUTH** WEDGEWOOD ROOMS
22 **BRIGHTON** KOMEDIA
23 **LONDON** 100 CLUB

A **CROSSTOWN CONCERTS & FRIENDS** PRESENTATION
BY ARRANGEMENT WITH **PRIMARY TALENT INTERNATIONAL**

M. WARD

UK TOUR 2022

FRIDAY 08 JULY
MANCHESTER NIGHT & DAY

SATURDAY 09 JULY
NOTTINGHAM BODEGA

SUNDAY 10 JULY
LONDON JAZZ CAFÉ

TUESDAY 12 JULY
BRISTOL THEKLA

WEDNESDAY 13 JULY
LEEDS BRUDENELL SOCIAL CLUB

FRIDAY 15 JULY
GLASGOW ORAN MOR

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"Bang Bang Rock & Roll"

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Soul Jazz Records
NO WAVE / DIY / Post-Punk CDs
Soul Jazz Records JAZZ
Soul Jazz Records REGGAE
SOUL JAZZ RECORDS
100% DYNAMITE

On the front line: the Soul Jazz vinyl racks at the label's Soho record shop.

Soul Jazz Compilations

The sounds of the universe, expertly curated. By the MOJO staff.

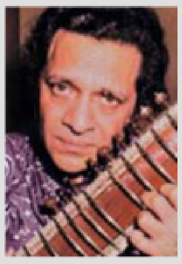
AS A MOJO reader, you probably see yourself as a bit of a cratedigger. You know your stuff, the canonical classics and the hidden gems, but you're also aware there's more to discover. Your tastes are wide, but they could always be wider, and you know when a little help is required: a super-informed record store clerk, perhaps, to guide you to hitherto unexplored corners of their shop. Or a record label, born out of the culture of those eclectic, open-minded record shops, that can dedicate 30 years to putting out precisely the kind of compilations – at once scholarly and exciting, specialised and anti-elitist – that you've needed all along.

This, in essence, is the MO of Soul Jazz Records, a label that's established themselves as masters of the formal mixtape since 1991. Soul Jazz was founded by a second-hand record dealer called Stuart Baker, and they run a great shop in London's Soho called Sounds Of The Universe, as well as having promoted club nights that often revolved around their *100% Dynamite!* series of reggae comps.

It was these Dynamite sets, and a hefty catalogue of Studio One-related releases, that initially tagged Soul Jazz – despite their name – as reggae specialists. But from the start, their remit has been vast, encompassing music from Cuba, Brazil, Venezuela, Nigeria and Haiti, New York no wave and UK grot-punk, early rap and New Age ambience, country funk and cold wave – as well as soul, jazz and much more. The packaging is always immaculate, the sleevenotes meticulous; every release an unerring labour of love.

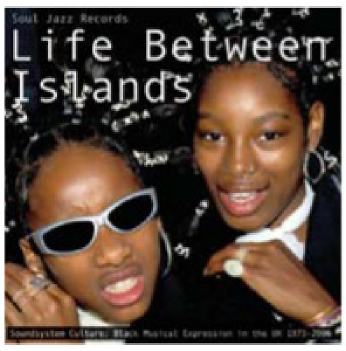
If there's a common factor through this astounding catalogue, it may well be a sense of perpetual groove. Choices often lean into the dancefloor, to the exhilarating possibilities of sound, and to a conviction that any music, handled the right way, can be accessible. For this Top 10, we've focused on their various artists comps, rather than the single artist sets dedicated to the likes of Arthur Russell and Bunny Lee. A lot of hard choices have had to be made, but our conclusion remains solid: it's hard to go wrong with any Soul Jazz release. Check your bucket!

> "Every release an unerring labour of love."



CAST YOUR VOTES...

This month you chose your Top 10 Soul Jazz comps. Next month we want your Ravi Shankar Top 10. Send selections via Twitter, Facebook, Instagram or e-mail to mojo@bauermedia.co.uk with the subject 'How To Buy Ravi Shankar' and we'll print the best comments.



10 Various Life Between Islands

SOUL JAZZ, 2022

You say: "Brilliantly sequenced, the soundtrack to an undervalued musical history – plus Trevor Hartley's amazing voice." Gareth Moses, via Twitter

As with Tate Britain's accompanying exhibition, *Life Between Islands* turns a lens on the interrelationship between Caribbean and British culture which, in this case, gave rise to such homegrown musical styles as jungle, hip-hop, lovers rock, roots reggae and jazz/funk. All are present here: from Black Slate's militant rocker Sticksman and Digital Mystikz's haunting dubstep Misty Winter, through to Janet Kay & Alton Ellis's contrastingly sweet lovers lament Still In Love. But it's Tabby Cat Kelly's roots gem Don't Call Us Immigrants, produced by Dennis Bovell, which perhaps best summarises proceedings: "Respect my colour, and I'll respect yours." *SM*

Soul Jazz Records presents
DEUTSCHE ELEKTRONISCHE MUSIK

4 Various Deutsche Elektronische Musik

SOUL JAZZ, 2013

You say: "The *Deutsche Elektronische Musik* series are my favourites. Outstanding and often featuring little-known bands." Dr Peter Starie, via Twitter

Of all esoteric genres, it's hard to think of one documented and revisited as often as the kosmische music of '70s Germany – Krautrock, in perhaps problematic shorthand. Trust Soul Jazz, though, to find a new spin. The four volumes of *Deutsche Elektronische Musik* build up to a pretty definitive catalogue of a scene that, beyond big hitters like Faust, Popol Vuh and Neu!, can be hard to navigate. As is the label's way, a sense of groove predominates, though it goes beyond motorik; Ibliss's flute-funk High Life is a real find; Can's goofy I Want More takes its rightful place among the hits. *JM*

Shutterstock

DELTA SWAMP ROCK
VOLUME ONE

9 Various
Delta Swamp Rock

SOUL JAZZ, 2011

You say: "A typically astute blend of the known and the lesser-known, conjuring a swamp you'd want to get lost in." Stan Emmerson, via Twitter

Not on the surface a typical area of interest for a label focused more often than not on black music, but *Delta Swamp Rock*'s subtitle – Sounds From The South: At The Crossroads Of Rock, Country And Soul – tells a deeper story. Here, the blues and R&B roots of Southern rock choogling are meticulously exposed; you might re-evaluate Lynyrd Skynrd, for starters. Duane Allman shines, repeatedly, Cher, Bobbie Gentry and Linda Ronstadt smash up the boy's club and, emphasising Soul Jazz's anti-snobbishness, there's room for Area Code 615's Whistle Test theme, too. *JM*

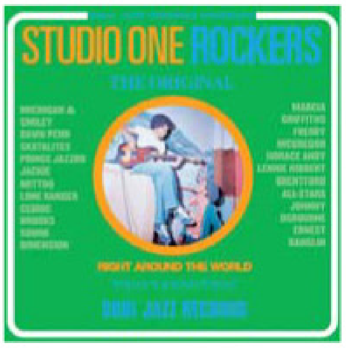
NU YORICA!
CULTURE CLASH IN NEW YORK CITY: EXPERIMENTS IN LATIN MUSIC 1970-77
A

8 Various
Nu Yorica!

SOUL JAZZ, 1996

You say: "[One of] the three best records I own (*Bossa Nova* and *Tropicália* being the other two)." @buffalasanga, via Twitter

Expanded and remastered for its 20th anniversary in 2015, an exemplary cultural and social history with a swinging soundtrack traces the evolution of Latin music in '70s New York, where the children of (amongst others) Puerto Rican, Cuban and African Americans rubbed shoulders and crashed genre boundaries. Charlie Palmieri sets a formidable pace for the party with Las Negritas De Carnival (1974). Its fabulous salsa swing sounds positively conservative next to Palmieri's acclaimed younger brother Eddie, whose wild, expansive piano intro to Un Dia Bonita alone justifies the 'experiments' in the subtitle; by the time the orchestra crash in (at around 8 mins) you'll be shaking… then swaying. *JB*


STUDIO ONE ROCKERS
THE ORIGINAL
RIGHT AROUND THE WORLD
SOUL JAZZ RECORDS

7 Various
Studio One Rockers

SOUL JAZZ, 2001

You say: "'I've been caning their Studio One comps: *Rockers*, *Soul*, that amazing Jackie Mittoo collection." Stewart Smith, via Twitter

The first style-themed Studio One set – see also: *Rub-A-Dub*, *Roots*, *DJs*, etc – *Rockers* remains unsurpassable. The title's definition is loose but the grooves are tight, running the gamut of '60s tunes and rhythms that teemed out of Coxsone Dodd's Brentford Road HQ, thence fuelling reggae for decades: from the foundational Real Rock, via rocksteady gold standards (Marcia Griffiths' Feel Like Jumping and Dawn Penn's No, No, No), on to classics from Johnny Osbourne (Truth And Rights), Freddie McGregor (Bobby Bobylon), Horace Andy (Skylarking), Michigan & Smiley (Eye Of Danger) et al. Fifteen tracks of inevitable dancehall detonation. *KC*

SOUL JAZZ RECORDS
NEW YORK NOISE
DANCE MUSIC FROM THE NEW YORK UNDERGROUND 1977-1982
THE DANCE MATERIAL MARS
KONK ARTO/NETO DINOSAUR L
THE CONTORTIONS ALAN VEGA
BUSH TETRAS CHAIN GANG
THEORETICAL GIRLS IMPLOG
LIZZY MERCIER DESCLOUX

6 Various
New York Noise

SOUL JAZZ, 2003

You say: "There's a whole lot of new music here for a new generation." @sheepsheadfood, via Twitter

Influential single-artist compilations of the long-overlooked ESG (*A South Bronx Story*, 2000) and Arthur Russell (*The World Of Arthur Russell*, 2004) galvanised mainstream interest in the nexus of no wave, avant-funk and disco – and here was the Olympian overview of that late-'70s/early-'80s New York scene. The Contortions get skronky, Glenn Branca adds screee, Konk bring bongos, amid a riot of in-your-face basslines. Caveat emptor: the 2016 version drops Rammellzee Vs K Rob, ESG, Defunkt, Glenn Branca, The Bloods and Liquid Liquid, and adds Arto/Neto, impLOG, Chain Gang and Alan Vega. Good – but the original shades it. *DE*

UNIVERSAL SOUNDS OF AMERICA
ART ENSEMBLE OF CHICAGO
SUN RA AND THE SOLAR ARKESTRA
STEVE REID AND THE MASTER BROTHERHOOD
MARCUS BELGRAVE
BYRON MORRIS AND UNITY
PHAROAH SANDERS
DAVID DURRAH

5 Various
Universal Sounds Of America

SOUL JAZZ, 1995

You say: "It opened an entirely new musical vocab and set a bar (sleevenotes, sequencing) they've managed to maintain and expand." The Jazz Dad, via Twitter

A classic example of Soul Jazz being ahead of the *Zeitgeist*, this early set zeroed in on a strain of jazz where spirituality, Afro-Futurism, the cosmic and the revolutionary all intersected – long before it became a hipster standby. Pharoah Sanders and Sun Ra you may well know, but the depth of knowledge here means Marcus Belgrave and Byron Morris cuts still feel like under-appreciated gems. Subsequent comps in the zone – among them *Black Fire! New Spirits!*, *Freedom, Rhythm & Sound*, *New Thing!* and *Jazz Is The Teacher, Funk Is The Preacher* – are every bit as essential. *JM*

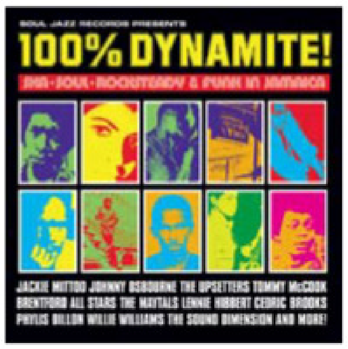
TROPICÁLIA
é proibido proibir

3 Various
Tropicália: A Brazilian Revolution In Sound

SOUL JAZZ, 2005

You say: "It has the heat, freedom and happiness of the Brazilian political psychedelic moment." Trevor Mill, via Twitter

Given the short lifespan and small membership of the original Tropicália movement, this is perhaps one of Soul Jazz's easier curation jobs. Still, inevitably, the selection of Gal Costa, Gilberto Gil, Os Mutantes, Caetano Veloso, Tom Zé and Jorge Ben's late-'60s tracks is terrific, with the focus on insurrectionist funkiness over pensive balladry: Costa's delirious Tuareg being a choice cut for adventurous DJs. Not so psychedelic, but the label's other Brazilian excursions help put Tropicália into a broader context, both political and cultural, notably the *Bossa Nova* and *Bossa Jazz* releases. *JM*


100% DYNAMITE!
SKA • SOUL • ROCKSTEADY & FUNK IN JAMAICA
JACKIE MITTOO JOHNNY OSBOURNE THE UPSETTERS TOMMY McCOOK
BRENTFORD ALL STARS THE MAYTALS LENNIE HIBBERT CEDRIC BROOKS
PHYLLIS DILLON WILLIE WILLIAMS THE SOUND DIMENSION AND MORE!

2 Various
100% Dynamite!

SOUL JAZZ, 1998

You say: "Brings back memories of fab 100% Dynamite nights at The Blue Angel." Birmingham_81, via Twitter

Compiled by SJ's staff, who, says Stuart Baker "came from a rare groove/jazz background so had a very different take on reggae." Hence *100% Dynamite!*'s perfectly sequenced blend of dance-floor-friendly quirky instrumentals (Upsetters/Jackie Mittoo), reggaefied soul-funk scorchers (Marvels/Phyllis Dillon) and majestic brass rockers (Tommy McCook/Cedric 'Im' Brooks). While the inclusion of instantly recognisable cuts such as Willie Williams' Clash-covered Armageddon Time and Brentford All Stars' Greedy G served to broaden the appeal of SJ's first reggae comp, it also crucially secured access to the motherlode of Jamaican music: Studio One's catalogue. Almost 25 years on, *100%* is still the bomb. *SM*

SOUL JAZZ RECORDS PRESENTS
NEW ORLEANS FUNK
NEW ORLEANS: THE ORIGINAL SOUND OF FUNK 1960-75
THE METERS
EDDIE BO
PROFESSOR LONGHAIR
THE WILD MAGNOLIAS
HUEY 'PIANO' SMITH
DR JOHN
LEE DORSEY
MARY JANE HOOPER
ALLEN TOUSSAINT
THE EXPLOSIONS
THE GATURS
AND MANY MORE!

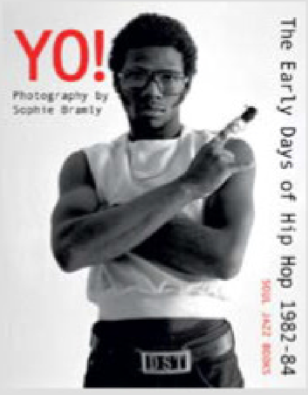
1 Various
New Orleans Funk

SOUL JAZZ, 2000

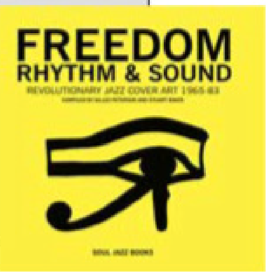
You say: "A soundtrack to many bus rides in SE London for me 20 years ago, gazing across the Camberwell bayou." Allotment Slim, via Twitter

For all their globetrotting eclecticism, it's possible to locate two critical epicentres of Soul Jazz compilation activity: Kingston, Jamaica and New Orleans, Louisiana. Our informal poll of the MOJO massive on Twitter and Facebook put this infallible party-starter as the ultimate Soul Jazz comp. As ever, the mix of canonical essentials – Dr. John, The Meters, Allen Toussaint – and crate-digging surprises – The Explosions' super-rare Garden Of Four Trees – ensures a tracklisting packed with both specialist knowledge and anti-elitism. And naturally there's plenty more to explore, with three more volumes of *New Orleans Funk* and the *Saturday Night Fish Fry* follow-up, too. End-to-end good times guaranteed. *JM*

NOW DIG THIS


YO!
Photography by Sophie Bramly
The Early Days of Hip Hop 1982-84
SOUL JAZZ BOOKS

We've tried to reference as many companion volumes as possible in our list (eg, get all the *Dynamite!* comps; *Nu Yorica Roots'* doo wop and boogaloo pre-history is a cracker). The money saved on hard-to-find vinyl would be well spent on some of their accompanying books: Beth Lesser's illuminating history of the Jamaican Dancehall, or French photographer Sophie Bramly's incredible NY reportage in Yo! The Early Days of Hip-Hop 1982-84. Meanwhile, Stuart Baker and Gilles Peterson's vinyl hauls yield stunning compendiums of artwork from Cuba, Studio One and Freedom Rhythm & Sound: Revolutionary Jazz Cover Art 1965-83. Start your Christmas lists now.


FREEDOM
RHYTHM & SOUND
REVOLUTIONARY JAZZ COVER ART 1965-83
SOUL JAZZ BOOKS

Island life: the self-described "Anglo-Irish-Jamaican boarding school flameout" Chris Blackwell with (from left) Junior Marvin, Bob Marley and Jacob Miller, 1980.

© Nathalie Delon/Island Trading Archive

Raising Sand

The man who gave us Millie, Bob, Traffic, Roxy, Grace, Nick et al looks back on a life spent in shorts and flip-flops. By **David Hutcheon.**

The Islander: My Life In Music And Beyond

★★★★

Chris Blackwell
with Paul Morley

NINE EIGHT BOOKS. £20

"MY ACCENT put me on the wrong side of history," the old Harrovian behind Island Records confesses early in this thoroughly quotable autobiography, a book it's hard to put down because you know that in a page or so Blackwell is going to pithily dismiss yet another of the superstars he signed against his better judgment. Few escape: U2 ("a bit rinky-dink"), Cat Stevens ("I couldn't have been less interested"), Frankie Goes To Hollywood ("all smoke and mirrors"), Roxy Music ("like The Tremeloes" – actually, it was Muff Winwood who thought that) and the author himself ("an Anglo-Irish-Jamaican boarding school flameout").

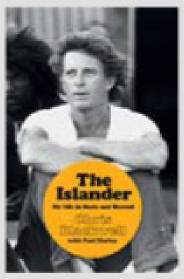
Yet, thanks to a blend of the self-confidence gained at his English public school, the ability to identify rare talent, and a unique upbringing among Jamaica's highest society ("Compared to Errol Flynn, the antics of Ginger Baker, Keith Moon, Marianne Faithful and Grace Jones were child's play"), he would forever land on his feet and let others work their magic. "My role was to listen to an idea," he says of producing records, "and say, 'That sounds good, let's do that.'" Yet he instinctively knew the difference between a lucky idiot and a genius: Guy Stevens, the Mod DJ *sine qua non*, was Island's "most significant signing after Bob Marley".

Born in 1937, by his mid-twenties Blackwell was shuttling between North America and Kingston, buying records to stock the island's jukeboxes. At home, he would party with Noël Coward and Ian Fleming, or hustle with early reggae kingpins Tom The Great Sebastian and Leslie Kong; in New York he was being taught the rudiments of cool by Miles Davis. A sideways move found him trying to flog Jamaican records to an uninterested Brian Jones in a WH Smith shop in central London, until the unprecedented success of My Boy Lollipop changed the landscape entirely – as a location scout on the first James Bond film, Dr No, Blackwell knew how important it was to get the geography right. The lesson he took from Millie's brief stardom was not to chase hits aggressively but to work with original talent over time and build success.

By 1965, then, the ethos that makes Island among the most fondly remembered labels of rock's ascendancy is in place. Blackwell meets Stevie Winwood in a pub, sends Traffic to get it together in the country; senses in Joe Boyd the same zealotry to sell folk that he has to promote Jamaican music; bides his time waiting for the "dazzling" Robert Palmer to hit pay dirt because he has turned Blackwell on to King Sunny Adé; and eventually lets his team persuade him U2 are a better investment than Spandau Ballet.

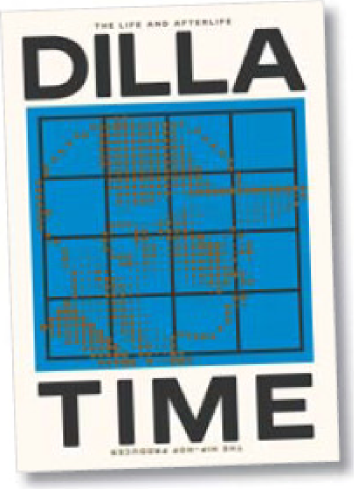
Written during lockdown by a man used to travelling 250,000 miles every year, you wouldn't bet on The Islander being the full stop on Blackwell's tale. After all, he writes with a wink, his mother, Blanche, lived to be 104. If he can find another Free, or Bob Marley, or John Martyn, they'd be in safe hands.

> "He would for ever land on his feet and let others work their magic."



WHAT WE'VE LEARNT

- Blackwell's mother, Blanche Lindo, was the inspiration for both Honeychile Ryder and Pussy Galore in Ian Fleming's James Bond novels.
- The original Island label logo was designed by Charles Saatchi.
- Blackwell doesn't own a copy of The Wailers' *Catch A Fire* LP in the original Zippo sleeve. Nor does he lock his car, as Bob Marley told him that creates a barrier for the people.
- Grace Jones is "where disco would have gone if it had been an experimental art form, not a money-making scam for lazy record companies."
- Blackwell wanted Jimmy Iovine (Patti Smith, Bruce Springsteen, Tom Petty) to produce U2 and thought Eno would be a "huge mistake".
- "You shouldn't buy an old house if the windows are too high."



Dilla Time: The Life And Afterlife Of J Dilla, The Hip-Hop Producer Who Reinvented Rhythm

★★★★★

Dan Charnas

SWIFT. £20

Stunning portrait of the short life and fast times of James Dewitt Yancey.

You don't have to fully sign up to Charnas's vision of J Dilla as a game-changing musical genius on a par with Louis Armstrong or Miles Davis to be swept along by this sensational piece of storytelling. Tiptoeing boldly along a fault-line connecting the "Polyrhythm of conflicting intentions" in the wonky street-map of Dilla's hometown of Detroit with the producer's uncanny ability to programme human fallibility into drum machines, Charnas uncovers a matrix of captivatingly relevant detail. PhD-level beat science, emotional carnage, mind-bending 'why not try this at home?' syncopation grids, strip-club etiquette – Dilla Time has them all. Sad, funny and unfailingly humane, it's not only one of the best books this writer has ever read about hip-hop but also sets a new gold standard for writing about music full stop.

Ben Thompson

The Hag

★★★★

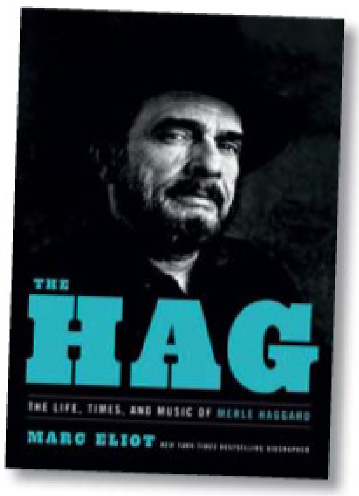
Marc Eliot

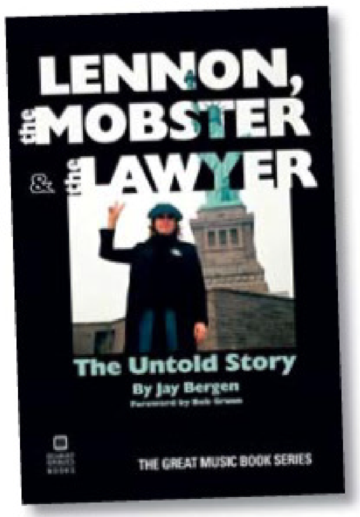
HACHETTE BOOKS. £16

The hard facts behind a country music maverick.

Johnny Cash called Merle Haggard "everything people think I am." From prison, hopping trains and witness to country music history from Bob Wills to Lefty Frizzell, Hag lived the life he sang about. The author captures the rough and sometimes seamy underside of a troubled kid who translated irrational guilt over his father's early death into incomparable artistry. Hag was complicated: despite his conservative rep, his politics were diverse, he smoked pot, quipped he was "a short-haired hippy" and loathed the Nashville establishment suits. Eliot focuses on these persistent contradictions in this detailed biography of the master songwriter, mellifluous singer and versatile multi-instrumentalist. His marriages and chart positions wavered, but he remained a working-man's artist until his 2016 death. Eliot spoke to Merle and family, as well as musicians and associates and the reader gets an inside view of a private man.

Michael Simmons





Lennon, The Mobster & The Lawyer

★★★★

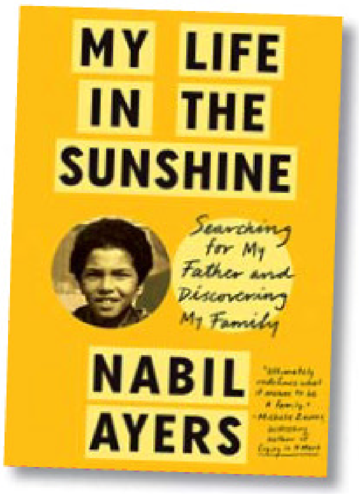
Jay Bergen

DEVAULT GRAVES. £20

Dreamer versus grifter: see you in court...

For a peace champion, John Lennon was continually in the wars between 1968 and 1977. Some battles he picked, others were thrust upon him. One such was when the Mafia-connected music mogul Morris Levy, having already grifted Lennon into agreeing to record and release three songs he controlled in settlement of his Come Together/You Can't Catch Me plagiarism claim, pushed his luck by releasing – as *Roots* on his own label – a lo-fi rough mix of what would be rush-released as 1975's *Rock 'N' Roll* covers LP. Battle was joined, with Lennon legally represented by old-school rock fan Jay Bergen. Now 85, he's assembled his memoir of the case from court transcripts and contemporary notes, and it's a window into the seldom-seen Lennon: lucid, pragmatic, knowledgeable and unflappable. Despite Levy's long-shot case and shoddy legal representation, the fight was no cakewalk, so gripping stuff with an all too brief happy-ever-after.

Mat Snow



My Life In The Sunshine

★★★★

Nabil Ayers

VIKING. £20

Shadows cast by his famous but absent father colour industry mover's memoir.

A childhood drummer with his own kit aged three, Nabil Ayers spent much of his adult life fathoming his deep connection to music beyond his shared genealogy with Roy Ayers – the vibraphonist father who got his blunt excuses in before conception. Ayers' acute recall, factual and emotional, makes for a breezy read as he jams with saxophonist uncle Alan Braufman in New York, negotiates subtle racial hurdles in Salt Lake City and, later, the Seattle indie scene, as he eludes fame with The Lemons and Alien Crime Syndicate. By his thirties, his father's influence gnaws more than he can ignore, culminating in a meeting that changes everything, but in none of the ways he anticipated. Best known as US head of 4AD, Ayers' sensitive prose and unswerving honesty make for a highly moving meditation on identity, race and family.

Andy Cowan

On Jazz: A Personal Journey

★★★★

Alyn Shipton

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS. £20

Zesty anecdotes of a mellifluous jazz sage.

If you only know Alyn Shipton as the avuncular voice of Radio 3's Jazz Record Requests, benignly cueing up the amazing cover of Rush's Tom Sawyer by Brad Mehldau, you're in for a splendid shock. Not least in the form of the full story behind 'Blue' Lu Barker's saucy 1938 classic Don't You Feel My Leg. Deftly weaving together personal reminiscence of Shipton's own bass-playing exploits with telling vignettes from the thousands of interviews he's conducted as a broadcaster, biographer and prolific co-writer of jazz memoirs, On Jazz covers a spectacularly extensive waterfront. From the curmudgeonly wind-up strategies of Ken Colyer, through the exact microphone set-up for Duke Ellington's Newport Suite, to an illuminating encounter with Ornette Coleman, this book is not a smorgasbord, it's a feast.

Ben Thompson

Exit Stage Left

★★★

Nick Duerden

HEADLINE. £20

How pop stars cope – or don't – when success goes away.

Interviewing musicians for Q magazine in the 1990s, Nick Duerden was adept at isolating notes of pathos in the chords of fame and takes that skill into this poignant exploration of the aftermath of adulation. Some of his case studies – say, S Club 7's Paul Cattermole – dwell beyond MOJO's sphere of interest, and it's hard for a book about failure as showbiz glibly defines it not to look like it's endorsing that value metric or slipping into *schadenfreude*. Yet in sympathetic encounters with Kevin Rowland and Sananda Maitreya (AKA Terence Trent D'Arby), Duerden acknowledges that it's not failing when you follow your own path away from the numbers. Unexpectedly, it's Robbie Williams (for whom failure is a relative term) who appears to have learned most, having faced up to his increasingly selective appeal and enjoyed the too-much-fucking-perspective. Now that sales no longer define him, he's discovered "I fucking *love* my job".

Danny Eccleston

Eyes wide shut: visionary beat scientist J Dilla gets the biography he deserves.

Getty

Far from home: the sainted Chris Bailey.

Stranded Man

Chris Bailey, frontman of Brisbane anti-heroes The Saints, left us on April 9.

SHORTLY AFTER Chris Bailey's death, Nick Cave posted a tribute in his Red Hand Files, with a photograph of The Saints' singer sat crumpled on the edge of the low stage of a small Melbourne club in early 1977. At the front of the crowd stood an awestruck 19-year-old stonewash denim-clad Nick Cave. "You can almost see the thought bubble forming above my head: 'This is what I want to do and this is who I want to be,'" Cave wrote. "In my opinion, The Saints were Australia's greatest band and Chris Bailey was my favourite singer."

As well as capturing the beginning of the rest of Cave's life, no less instructive was the picture's representation of Bailey, his back turned to the audience. Born in Kenya to Irish parents in 1956, Chris Bailey lived in Belfast prior to his family emigrating to Queensland, settling in the western suburbs of Brisbane, an ultra-conservative environment he later termed "the Deep North of Australia". At 14, Bailey met Ed Kuepper – "during detention at Oxley High School," according to the latter – and the pair formed Kid Galahad And The Eternals with drummer Ivor Hay. Adding bassist Kym Bradshaw, the band became The Saints, and in September 1976, after two years struggling to get gigs in Queensland while stoking their outsider angst with cheap whisky and records left by US troops on furlough from Vietnam, the quartet self-released (I'm) Stranded, a startlingly antagonistic thrash driven by Bailey's desperate moan.

In contrast to antipathy at home, The Saints' debut single landed with uncanny timing in a UK stirring to punk, whose pivotal groups had yet to release a record. "Single of this and every week," declared Jonh Ingham in Sounds. The band were signed by EMI and released the *(I'm) Stranded* album in February 1977. Now relocated to London, the super-aggro This Perfect Day saw The Saints appear on the same July 14 edition of Top Of The Pops as the Sex Pistols. Yet Bailey was already disenchanted with punk and the industry's machinations. 1978's Know Your Product single was a piledriving union of the Motor City's rock and soul traditions, but Bailey's growing estrangement from Kuepper saw the band split late that year after a third album, *Prehistoric Sounds*.

Over subsequent decades, Bailey contentedly subsisted as a nomadic troubadour, feted in France, resident in Sweden and Holland, releasing solo records and a further 10 Saints albums with ever-changing line-ups. The original Saints finally reconciled in 2001 for induction to the Australian Recording Industry Association Hall of Fame, and in 2009 played a festival tour curated by Mick Harvey. Although commercial success remained modest at best ("I write hideous turgid Celtic ballads for a living," Bailey explained), when validation came it was invariably significant: performing to 75,000 at Melbourne Cricket Ground in 1998, singing on Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds' *Nocturama*, or Bruce Springsteen covering Just Like Fire Would on 2014's *High Hopes*. In 2021, the Queensland State Library cited an original 7-inch of (I'm) Stranded as one of the treasures in its John Oxley collection, "a piece of music history, influencing generations of bands around the world."

"As a teenager I had no idea I would be a career musician," Bailey reflected to this writer in 2007. "If I got to the next weekend and had enough money to get pished, that sounded like a life. So all these years later, to still have a coterie of enthusiasm around the planet, that's quite a buzz – one that's obviously stemmed from really not caring."

Keith Cameron

> "Chris Bailey was my favourite singer."
> NICK CAVE

THE LEGACY

The Album: The Saints *Eternally Yours* (Harvest, 1978)
The Sound: The follow-up to *(I'm) Stranded* delivers buzzsaw thrills with heightened songwriting savvy and, on Know Your Product and Orstralia, a gritty horn section straight outta Stax. Few singers have evinced alienation with more poetic verve than Bailey's pleading "21 years is a long long time to be in this prison where there ain't no crime."

Bleddyn Butcher

Art Rupe

Specialty Records' R&B catalyst

BORN 1917

In a mere decade and a half, Art Rupe's Specialty label connected gospel, R&B and proto-rock'n'roll and built a bridge between 'race records' for black listeners and rock'n'roll for white listeners. This development not only got white teenagers dancing but, shocking for the segregated South, dancing with black teenagers.

Born Arthur Newton Goldberg in a working-class Jewish family, he grew up in a diverse neighbourhood of McKeesport, Pennsylvania. Down the street was a black church, whose steps the young Rupe would sit on and listen to the gospel sermons. After his National Service in Los Angeles he tried and failed to get into the movie industry. Remembering the music of his old neighbourhood church, he started spending his days and nights listening to records and going to clubs to see what made black music sell. Rupe co-founded Juke Box Records in 1944, which had a regional hit with The Sepia Tones' Boogie #1. After a business disagreement, he sold his share of Juke Box to his partners and started Specialty Records in 1945, releasing a string of gospel and blues records including Joe Liggins' 1950 R&B Number 1 Pink Champagne.

Inspired by the crossover appeal of Fats Domino, Rupe went to New Orleans and discovered Lloyd Price, whose Lawdy Miss Clawdy was a huge hit in 1952. When Price was conscripted, he suggested Rupe sign Little Richard; after the bomb that was Tutti Frutti in 1955, even more hits buoyed Specialty's books. Following Little Richard's religious conversion, Specialty kept rocking with Larry Williams, Art Neville and Clifton Chenier, and acquired a healthy roster of gospel artists including Sam Cooke & The Soul Stirrers. But when he let Bumps Blackwell take Sam Cooke to Keen Records with 1957's You Send Me – a move that made Cooke a crossover megastar – Rupe started to lose interest. Citing the "payola" culture, he eased out of the record business in 1959 and founded Artex Oil and, later, the Arthur N. Rupe Foundation, which supported health care education and public policy. He died in Santa Barbara, aged 104.

Gianluca Tramontana

Maximum R&B: Art Rupe outside Specialty's office at 311 Venice Blvd., Los Angeles, 1948.

Alamy, Getty (3)

Tools of the trade: master caster Cynthia with her handiwork.

Cynthia Plaster Caster

Rock memberologist

BORN 1947

It started with a photo of The Beatles, although she didn't realise they were musicians. "They looked so cute. I thought they were a comedy troupe," she told me. And so Chicago high school student Cynthia Albritton developed a fascination with British Invasion bands, doorstepping The Rolling Stones' hotel in June 1964. Encouraged by her teacher to cast something for a project, the normally shy Cynthia discovered a way to meet bands: "We want to make plaster casts of your dicks." She immortalised Hendrix in 1968 (a moulding she named the Penis de Milo), Zappa put her on salary, and Rolling Stone featured the Plaster Casters in their 1969 Groupies issue. Other of her subjects included Eric Burdon, Wayne Kramer and Anthony Newley. Resuming activities in the late '80s, she also did hilarious spoken-word appearances, eventually casting female artists' breasts as well. A gentle, fearless soul, she preserved a very singular part of rock history.

Max Décharné

Paul Siebel

Country-Folk Singer-Songwriter

BORN 1937

While Buffalo, New York native Paul Siebel came up through the Greenwich Village folk scene, he sang and wrote hardcore country songs with literate lyrics, ranging from mythological epics to bus-stop weepers. His voice was a gorgeous, high-lonesome wail. Two studio albums, *Woodsmoke And Oranges* (1970) and *Jack-Knife Gypsy* (1971), were ignored by the public, but beloved by fellow musicians. Both Linda Ronstadt and Bonnie Raitt cut Louise, the story of a low-rent prostitute that was his most well-known song, while the duo of Waylon Jennings and Emmylou Harris covered Spanish Johnny. The lovely, if modest *Live At McCabe's* (1978) ended his recording career and, silenced by stage fright and a drinking problem, he ended up as a baker and parks worker. Like a character in a Paul Siebel song, he lived on the fringes, and left a wistful tale in his wake.

Michael Simmons

> "Paul Siebel lived on the fringes, and left a wistful tale in his wake."

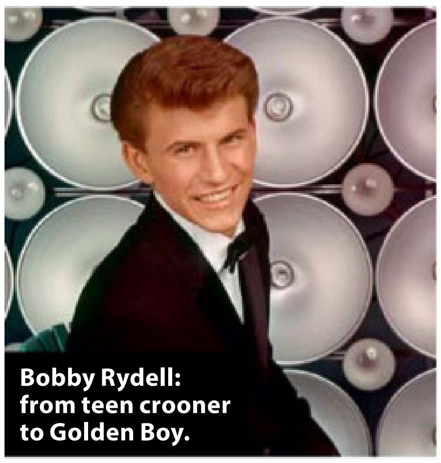
Bobby Rydell

Teen idol

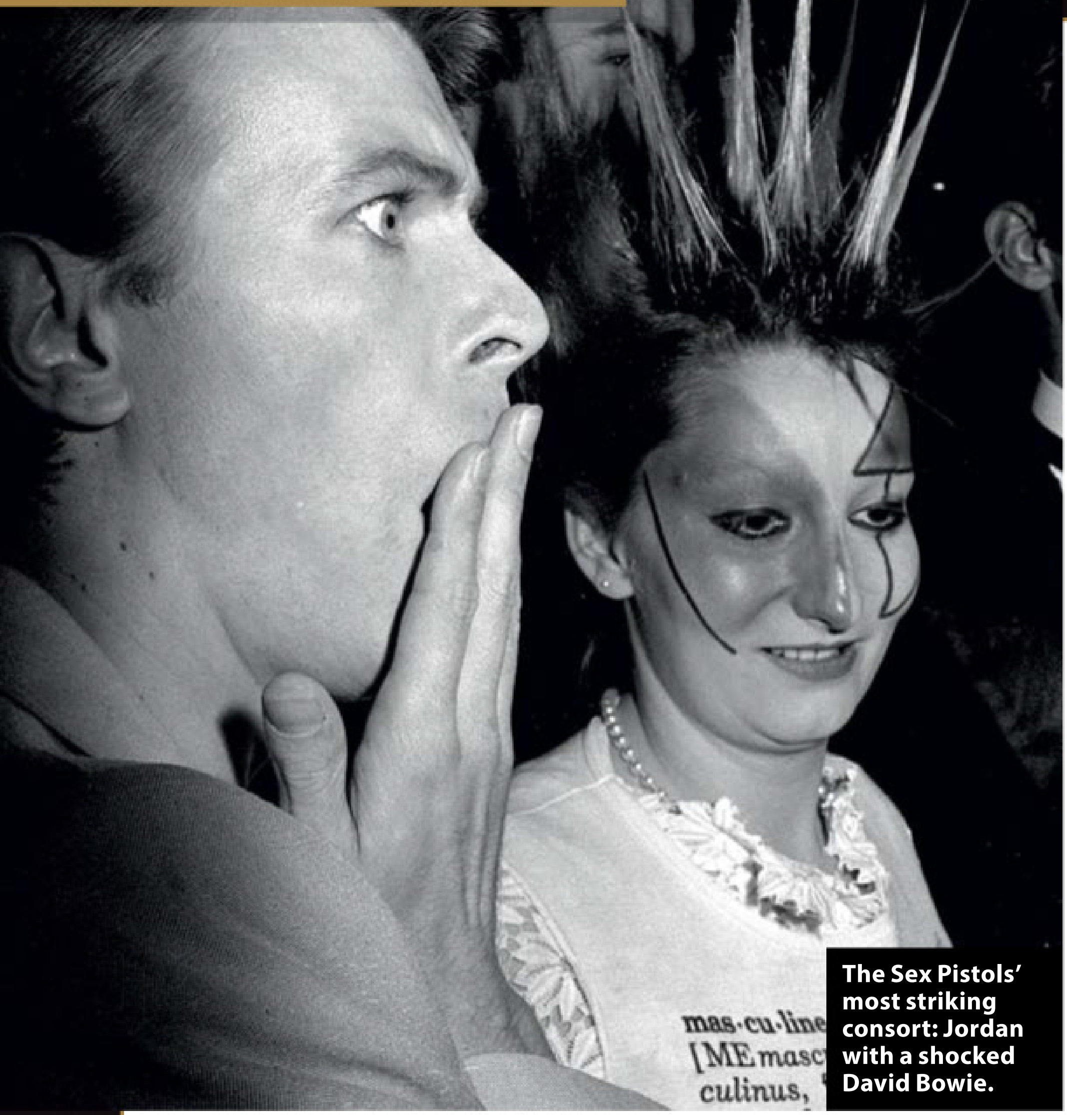
BORN 1942

Raised in south Philadelphia, Robert Ridarelli got his stage name when he appeared on the TV show of bandleader Paul Whiteman as a kid. After playing drums in local band Rocco And His Saints, Rydell went solo as a singer in 1958. His chart success as a heart-throb, able to straddle rock'n'roll and crooning, spanned 1959's Kissin' Time to 1963's Forget Him, a streak including 14 US Top 20 singles, as well as 1960's Number 2 (and UK Number 7) Wild One. He also acted in films including Bye Bye Birdie and appeared on TV shows with Milton Berle, Jack Benny, George Burns and others. Eclipsed by the British Invasion – Paul McCartney later said She Loves You was inspired by listening to Rydell – he carried on singing in cabaret in Vegas, beat alcoholism and, from the early '80s to 2021, sang with fellow south Philly natives Frankie Avalon and Fabian in The Golden Boys. He expressed amazement and delight that in the Broadway musical Grease and its 1978 movie adaptation, Rydell High School was named in his honour.

Ian Harrison



Bobby Rydell: from teen crooner to Golden Boy.



The Sex Pistols' most striking consort: Jordan with a shocked David Bowie.

Pamela Anne 'Jordan' Rooke

Punk's premier shop manager, icon and muse

BORN 1955

A ballet-mad girl from sleepy Seaford in East Sussex, Pamela Rooke reinvented herself after a near-fatal car crash at 15 and twirled into infamy as store manager of Malcolm McLaren and Vivienne Westwood's SEX shop at 430 King's Road. Naming herself after F Scott Fitzgerald's Jordan Baker, with her shards of bleached hair and Mondrian-inspired make-up, she was the Sex Pistols' most striking consort, accompanying the mayhem of their 1976 TV debut on So It Goes by introducing them as "even better than the lovely Joni Mitchell" and incurring the lifelong wrath of Clive James.

She had been provoking outrage long before, on her daily commute from Seaford to Chelsea, when her 'work uniform' of underwear and stilettos caused commuter chaos. Filmmaker Derek Jarman was stunned by his first vision of her at Victoria station: "White patent boots clattering down the platform, transparent plastic miniskirt revealing a hazy pudenda… the face that launched a thousand tabloids." He cast her as Amyl Nitrate in Jubilee (1978) and she stole the show, dancing ballet en pointe on concrete, around a bonfire in a rubble-strewn disused dock in Deptford.

Jordan insisted Jarman cast Adam Ant, who had been leaving her secret love letters at 430, and whom she subsequently managed. When she handed those reins to McLaren and he made off with the Ants for Bow Wow Wow, it was Jordan who masterminded Adam's *Kings Of The Wild Frontier* comeback with Marco Pirroni. Following her marriage to Ants' bassist Kevin Mooney in 1981 – for which Westwood gave her the sack – she developed a heroin habit that she only kicked by returning to Seaford. Here she remade herself as a veterinary nurse and prize-winning breeder of Burmese cats, only breaking her silence when we wrote her memoir together. Defying Gravity was published in 2018 and the nationwide readings she nicknamed the 'Anarchy Tour' were greeted with vastly more love than outrage. She died from bile duct cancer on April 3, aged 66.

Cathi Unsworth

Jimmy Karstein

Tulsa drummer

BORN 1944

Karstein, who spent around 60 of his 78 years behind the drums, was among the pioneers of the Tulsa sound – the mix of blues, barroom country, swamp rock and rock'n'roll that shuffled and swung out of Oklahoma mid-last century. On the local circuit he played with Leon Russell, David Gates and JJ Cale, becoming so close with Cale that when JJ left for LA to join Russell, Karstein went too. He'd end up playing with Cale longer than any other musician – including on Cale's one-off album of psychedelic covers by fake band The Leather-coated Minds, *A Trip Down The Sunset Strip* (1967). In LA, Karstein had a regular gig in Gary Lewis's the Playboys, appearing with them on The Ed Sullivan Show. He also played with Eric Clapton, Taj Mahal, the Everly Brothers and Joe Cocker and many, many more.

Sylvie Simmons

Joe Messina

Funk Brother

BORN 1928

Memorably described as a "white brother with soul," Detroit-born Messina was an accomplished guitarist who played alongside jazz greats Charlie Parker and Miles Davis when they visited the Motor City in the 1950s, but is best remembered for his contribution to Berry Gordy's Motown sound in the '60s and early '70s. As a member of Motown's Funk Brothers studio band, his crisply accented rhythm guitar work appeared on some of the label's most iconic records; from Martha & The Vandellas' Dancing In The Street to Marvin Gaye's What's Going On. When Gordy's company moved to LA in 1972, Messina stayed in Detroit, took up the harmonica and published two music theory books. Wider recognition eluded him until 2002, when the Standing In The Shadows Of Motown documentary about the Funk Brothers won him a Grammy. Summing up his Motown years, he said in 2017: "I considered it just another job, but I did have fun."

Charles Waring

Donald 'Tabby Diamond' Shaw

BORN 1954

Fitzroy 'Bunny Diamond' Simpson

BORN 1951

Two Mighty Diamonds

From Trenchtown, JA, Donald 'Tabby Diamond' Shaw and Fitzroy 'Bunny Diamond' Simpson made up two-thirds of The Mighty Diamonds, the vocal harmony trio who combined Philly and Chicago soft soul with roots reggae and Rasta belief. With Lloyd 'Judge' Ferguson, they debuted as The Dymonds in 1969. After stints with Jah Lloyd, Lee Perry and Bunny Lee, they struck gold at Channel One with Joseph Hoo Kim in 1975, with covers of The Stylistics' Country Living, The Chi-lites' Stoned Out Of My Mind and their own Right Time. The latter lent its title to their 1976 debut LP on Virgin – their first of 46 – which secured them a UK fanbase, enhanced when Musical Youth re-imagined 1981's Pass The Kouchie as the pop hit Pass The Dutchie. Never splitting, they later worked with Joe Gibbs, Tapper Zukie and Gussie Clarke, and in 2021 were awarded Jamaica's Order Of Distinction for their contribution to reggae. On March 29, Tabby Diamond was murdered in a drive-by shooting in Kingston; Bunny Diamond passed away three days later.

Lois Wilson

Mighty Diamonds' Fitzroy 'Bunny' Simpson (left) and Donald 'Tabby' Shaw passed away within three days of each other.

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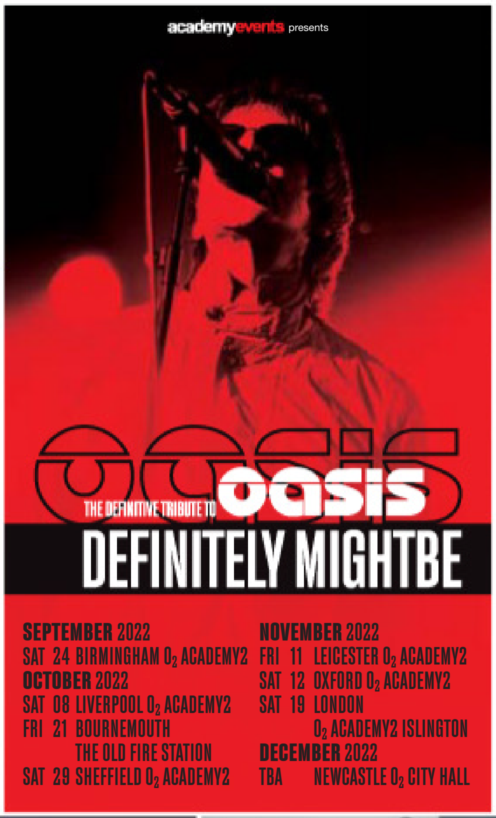

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Floating on: Klaus Schulze, living the life electronic.

Klaus Schulze

Berlin Synthesist

BORN 1947

Creator of forward-looking electronic sounds of prodigious length, space, texture and interpretive fluidity, Klaus Schulze was unimpressed with critics' use of terms such as kosmische music or Krautrock. But he admitted he liked a description his output had received in France – 'Musique Planante,' or floating music.

To float was in his nature. Born in Berlin, as a teenager he was a fan of instrumental guitar bands such as The Shadows and The Ventures. After playing with experimental outfits Eruption and Psy-Free, he later served time in two legendary experimental German groups: after attending Kreuzberg's Zodiak Free Arts Lab, he joined Tangerine Dream on drums for 1970's debut *Electronic Meditation*. Speaking to MOJO in 2010, he likened the LP to "electronic punk. We wanted to kill every music we had done and heard before, to make ourselves free from the tradition of the past." After just eight months, he jumped ship to become keyboardist/drummer for Ash Ra Tempel, playing on 1971's self-titled debut. Again, he left after just one album.

With 1972's haunting, alien solo debut *Irrlicht*, he began working with synthesizers, and for almost five decades, he did not stop. The following years would include more than 50 solo LPs, including such 'Berlin School' classics as *Cyborg* and *Timewind*; collaborations with The Cosmic Jokers, Lisa Gerrard, Steve Winwood and Stomu Yamashta, and others; music for film and dramatic productions; and 16 volumes of his *La Vie Electronique* series. He also released music as Richard Wahnfried, recorded interpretations of Wagner and Pink Floyd, and, on his Inteam label, gave his Ash Ra Tempel bandmate Manuel Göttsching's electronic classic *E2-E4* its first release in 1984. Regarding the advent of techno and ambient music in the '90s, he mischievously declared it brought, "fresh air into this already smelly electronic music scene."

Apart from an Ash Ra Tempel reunion in 2000, he was uninterested in looking back, and his final album, *Deus Arrakis*, will be released in June. Further archival releases are to be hoped for, to further mark a creative life lived on its own terms. "I've always done," said Schulze, "what I found beautiful."

Ian Harrison

THEY ALSO SERVED

CONVOY KING **C.W. McCALL** (below, b.Billie Dale Fries, 1928) was working at an Omaha advertising agency when, in 1973, he devised his truck-driving alter-ego for a series of award-winning bread adverts. As a recording artist, in 1976 he scored US Number 1 and global hit Convoy, a speed limit protest novelty which cashed in on the CB radio craze and inspired Sam Peckinpah's 1978 movie of the same name. He was later elected mayor of Ouray, Colorado.

ACCRINGTON-BORN **SIR HARRISON BIRTWISTLE** (b.1934) was a modernist composer who abjured indulgences like melodic accessibility, but his capacious *oeuvre*, embracing chamber, orchestral and choral works, was widely revered. He gained an international reputation with works like dense, electronically-punctuated 1986 opera The Mask Of Orpheus, which the rarely reticent composer himself described as "perhaps the most complex work of art ever made". He later explored a quieter, if still austere melancholy.

FRONTMAN and keyboard player **DAVID 'KUBIE' KUBINEC** (b.1948) played Hamburg with **The Pieces Of Mind** before forming **World Of Oz**, whose whimsical 1968 single The Muffin Man was a hit in Europe. After his 1974 solo LP *Day Of The Madman*, Kubinec joined **Mainhorse** before fronting Andrew Loog Oldham affiliates **The Rats**, whose 1974 45 Turtle Dove looked set for success. His 1978 solo LP *Some Things Never Change* was produced by **John Cale**, and featured **Chris Spedding** on guitar.

VOCALIST **RE STYLES** (below, b.Shirley Macleod, 1950) sang with San Francisco's transgressive glam rockers **The Tubes** from 1976's *Young And Rich* album to 1979's *Remote Control*. Also credited with on-stage choreography and costume design, the Dutch-born singer had previously modelled for Playboy and acted in **Alejandro Jodorowsky**'s The Holy Mountain (1973) and **Sun Ra**'s Space Is The Place (1974). Post-Tubes, she appeared in 1980 film Xanadu and released 1983 solo single, The Nuclear Beauty Parlor.

REGGAE LUMINARY **NATTY WAILER** (b.Nathaniel Ian Wynter 1954) was a regular at **Bob Marley**'s home and studio at 56 Hope Road, Kingston, in the early '70s. For nine years until Marley's death, Wynter rehearsed and toured with **The Wailers** as assistant chef and auxiliary keyboardist, and was a member of the late-'80s Wailers line-up. As part of Bunny Lee's house band **The Aggrovators**, Wynter appeared on LPs including 1975's *King Tubby Presents The Roots Of Dub*. Later, he relocated to Wexford in Ireland and led the **Reggae Vibes**, who released *Lifted* (2000) and *Destiny* (2013).

SINGER **SUSAN JACKS** (b.1948) began singing with her husband Terry (of Seasons In The Sun fame) in 1968. As **The Poppy Family** they had Canadian hits including 1969's Number 1 Which Way You Goin' Billy, also a US Number 2 and UK Number 7. The group name was dropped in 1972 and her marriage ended the following year; she later recorded solo and raised awareness for organ donation initiatives.

EARTH, WIND & FIRE sax player **ANDREW WOOLFOLK** (b.1950) played with the band from 1973-93, appearing on hits including September, Shining Star and Boogie Wonderland. He also played with **Level 42**, **Deniece Williams**, **Stanley Turrentine** and **Phil Collins**, and on albums by his bandmate and high school friend **Philip Bailey**. In 2000 he was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame as a member of EW&F.

LOS LOBOS founder member **FRANCISCO GONZÁLEZ** (b.1953) started the East Los Angeles Chicano mainstays, recalled his bandmates, for the purpose of "playing Mexican music for our mothers." He sang and played mandolin with the group from 1973-76, leaving before they released their first LP. He later played the Vera Cruz Mexican harp and helped found handmade strings partnership Guadalupe Custom Strings.

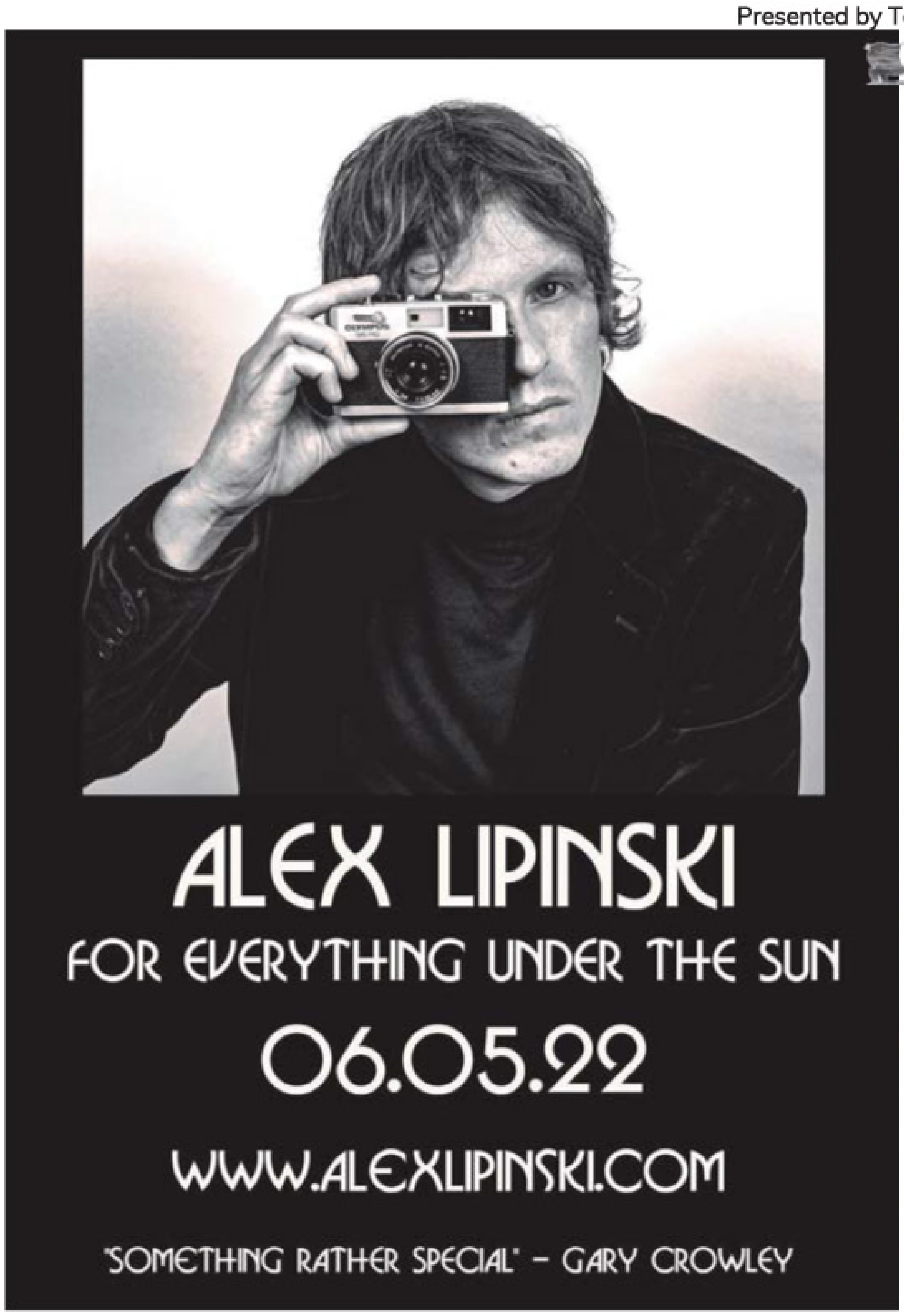
DUBLIN-BORN SINGER **CON CLUSKEY** (b.1935) sang lead with Irish vocal trio **The Bachelors**, enjoying their first hit with 1962's Charmaine, under the eye of Decca's Dick Rowe. The first Irish group to have a UK Number 1, with 1964's American-influenced Diane, the same year's I Believe sold over a million. They also appeared on films and TV. Though third member John Stokes left acrimoniously in 1984, Con and his brother Dec continued on, releasing their 77th album *Stripped Down Bachelors* in 2017.

TEXAS BLUESMAN **GUITAR SHORTY** (below, b.1934) cut his debut, Irma Lee b/w You Don't Treat Me Right with **Willie Dixon** in 1957, aged 17. Thereafter, **Ray Charles** invited Shorty to join his touring band, which led to gigs with **Sam Cooke** and Shorty's hero **Guitar Slim**, whose energetic stage presence he emulated, in turn inspiring the young Jimi Hendrix to set fire to his guitar. Shorty didn't make an album until 1989, but 10 more followed, including late-career success with 2004's *Watch Your Back*.

SWELL frontman **DAVID FREEL** (b.1958) formed his San Francisco indie/psych group in 1989. John Peel picks, they released albums on Rick Rubin's Def American label and Beggars Banquet (1998's *For All The Beautiful People* featured PJ Harvey foil Rob Ellis on drums). Freel later released music as **Be My Weapon**, **Wendell Davis** and **Triple Dead Heat**, and ran the Vinyl On Demand bespoke lathe-cut record business in Oregon. His Swell bandmate Monte Vallier wrote he disliked being on-stage: "He only wanted to write songs… to create atmosphere and convey moods."

Jenny Bulley, Ian Harrison and David Sheppard

Alamy, Getty (2), Shutterstock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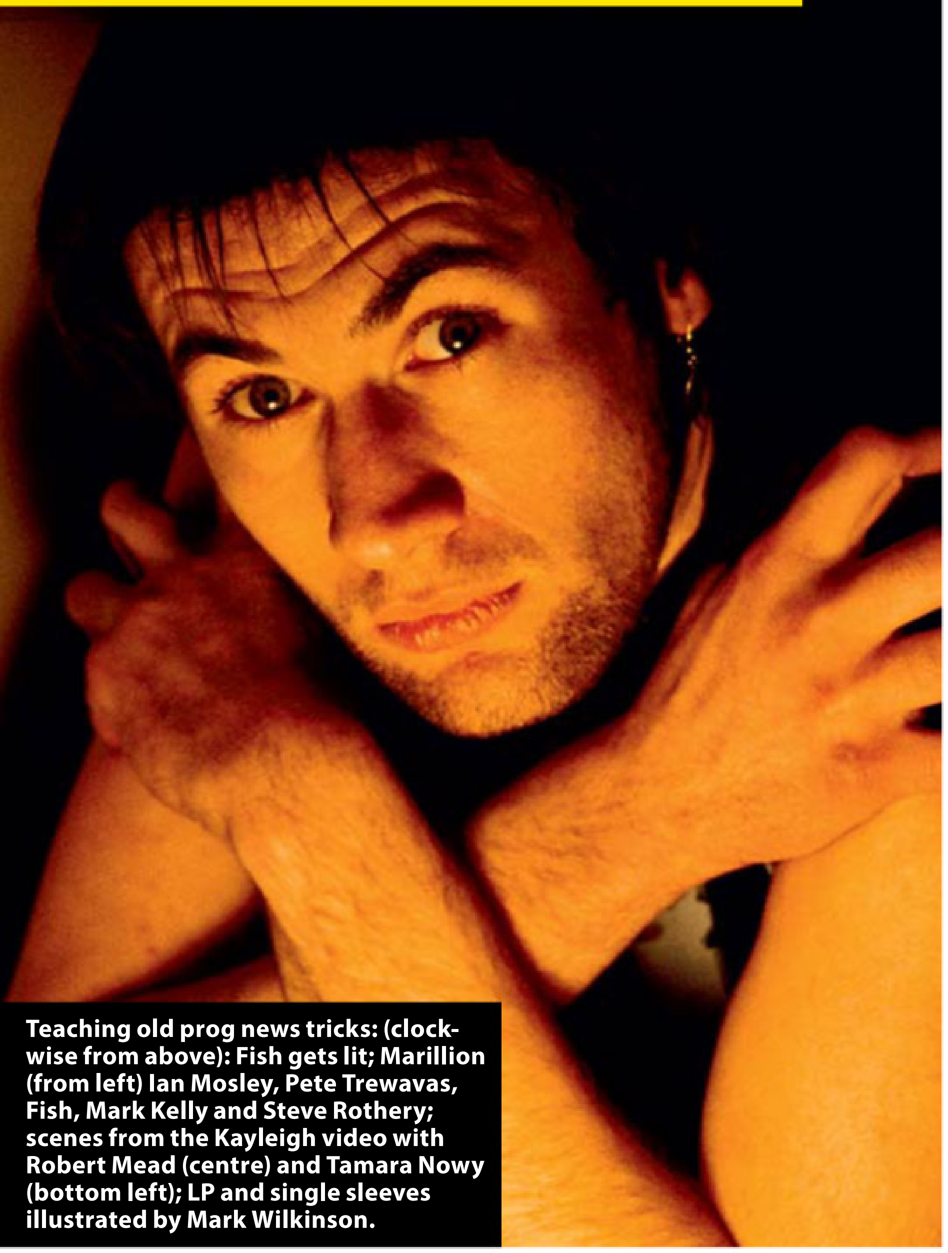
SEX PISTOLS



Teaching old prog news tricks: (clockwise from above): Fish gets lit; Marillion (from left) Ian Mosley, Pete Trewavas, Fish, Mark Kelly and Steve Rothery; scenes from the Kayleigh video with Robert Mead (centre) and Tamara Nowy (bottom left); LP and single sleeves illustrated by Mark Wilkinson.

JUNE 1985

…Marillion rule the charts!

JUNE 5 Tonight at La Sala Canciller club in Madrid – hailed as Spain's "Temple of Heavy Metal" – Marillion played the second date of a European tour promoting their impending third album, the unrepentant concept LP *Misplaced Childhood*. Sounds were there for an on-the-road report, and band frontman Fish was in no mood for compromise.

"We just put our fingers up to the world and got on with it," said Fish, also known as Derek Dick, of the record. "American producers… were turning us down saying, 'Nobody's making concept albums these days, and, besides, there's no hits on it.' Which sounds great right now!"

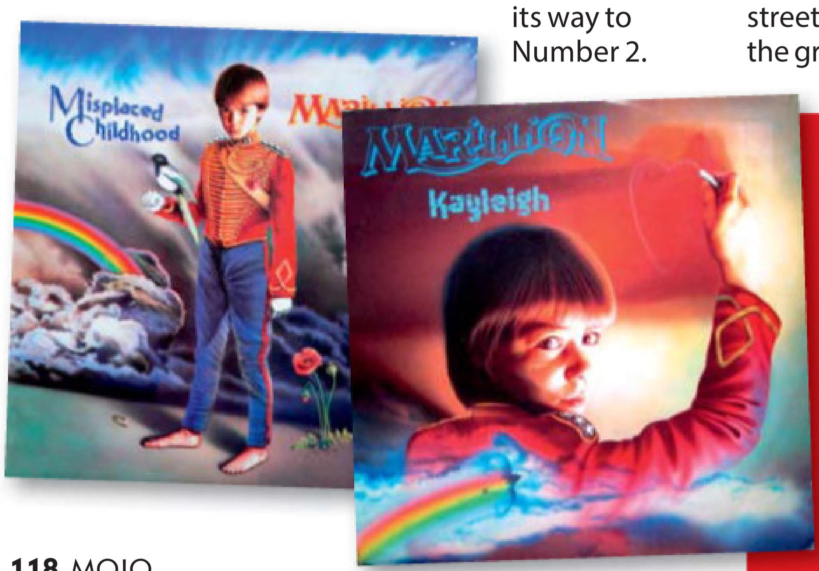
His triumphalism was understandable. The group had already scored two Top 10 albums and four Top 40 singles, but now their success had reached an unignorable new level: helped by performances on Top Of The Pops and the Wogan chat show, sixth 45 Kayleigh was currently in the UK Top 5 and on its way to Number 2.

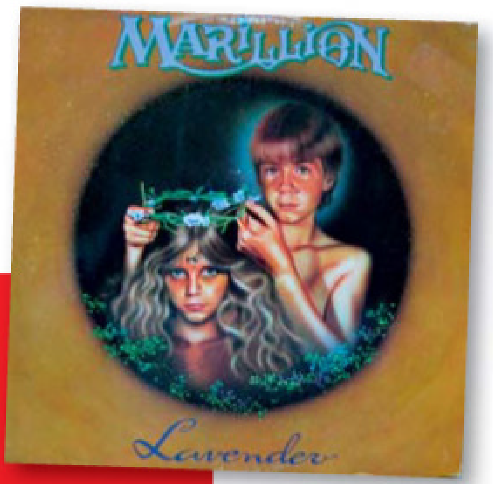
The band had formed in the late '70s in Aylesbury, with Fish joining in early '81. By 1984, their classic line-up of Fish, guitarist Steve Rothery, keyboardist Mark Kelly, bassist Pete Trewavas and drummer Ian Mosley was in place. Heretically to some listeners in this era of shining electronic pop, the group loved Floyd and Genesis, and had thrown in their lot with the deeply unvoguish genre of progressive rock. "As a band who like to smash against the walls of categorisation we've been fucked up so many times by people who just take one look at the band and think – 'Genesis'," Fish had raged to Paul Morley. "And then a lot of people who hate Genesis think, 'Well then, I'll hate Marillion…' We're probably the most unfashionable band in Britain."

With lyrics written for Fish's former on-off girlfriend Kay, lost-love song Kayleigh was an outstanding rock single that transcended such preconceptions. A video for it was filmed on the streets of West Berlin, where the group were recording *Misplaced Childhood* at Hansa Tonstudio, adjacent to the Berlin Wall. Ten-year-old Robert Mead, who played the role of the hussar-jacketed, shoeless 'drummer boy' that featured on illustrator Mark Wilkinson's artwork for the LP and its singles, flew over to appear, while one Tamara Nowy played Fish's elusive love interest. Fish remembered the song's subject Kay, a pharmacist in Aylesbury, to Dutch broadcaster NPO Radio 2 in 2020. "We fell in love," he reflected, "but when I went and joined Marillion I gave up everything… I went away to America on a tour and came back and she'd gone."

On June 29 *Misplaced Childhood*, with its LSD-inspired concept of fading youth, success and what it costs, entered the charts at Number 1, and went on to sell in platinum quantities. August's 45 Lavender would also go Top 5. Despite an aborted UK tour in September when Fish's voice gave out, the group were on a roll, and spent the next year touring Europe, Japan, Britain and the US. The *Misplaced Childhood* period peaked with a massive show at the Milton Keynes Bowl, entitled Welcome To The Garden Party, on June 28, 1986, with support acts including Jethro Tull and Gary Moore. Yet there was trouble looming.

"We'd gone from being a decidedly unhip





> "We're probably the most unfashionable band in Britain."
> **FISH**

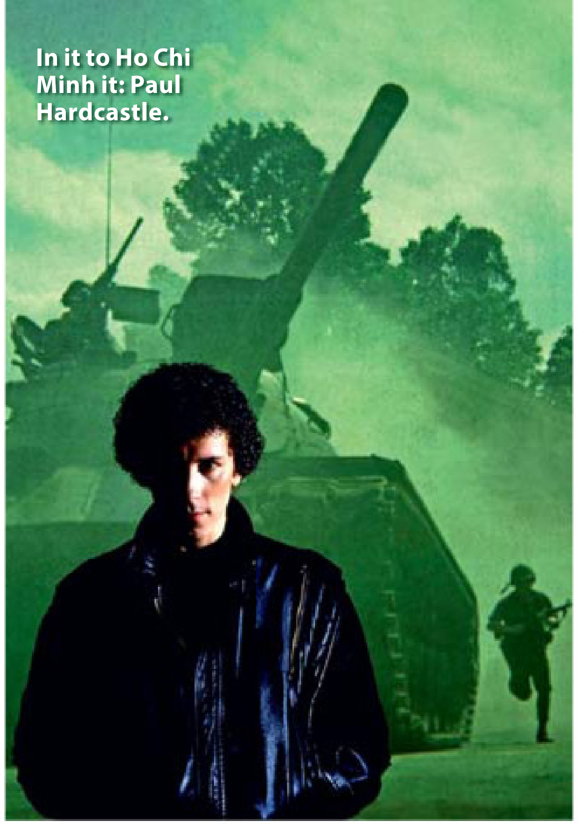
band that everyone fucking hated, to getting fucking Top 5 singles," Fish later told MOJO. "I think I became distanced from the band… the demands on us were for an album straight away and another hit, 'Kayleigh Two'. It wasn't gonna happen."

The band managed one more LP – titled, portentously, *Clutching At Straws* – before Fish departed for a solo career in 1988. Marillion regrouped with new singer Steve Hogarth and continue to this day.

There were a series of postscripts to the story. Fish would marry Kayleigh video star Tamara Nowy in 1987. Then, in 2005, he re-established contact with old love Kay, discovering she'd never listened to *Misplaced Childhood*. "She said, 'I never realised that that was how you felt at the time,'" he told NPO Radio 2. "The next thing I got a phone call off a friend of ours, that said she'd died of cancer."

Fish would play the LP in full live, most notably on a 30th anniversary tour in 2015, and released the live recordings *Return To Childhood* (2006) – which featured a new Mark Wilkinson artwork of the grown Robert Mead with his 10-year-old self – and *Farewell To Childhood* (2017). Apart from an informal get-together on-stage in Aylesbury to play debut single Market Square Heroes in 2007, a reconvening of Marillion and their former singer seems unlikely. As keysman Kelly said in his recent memoir Marillion, Misadventures & Marathons, "sometimes it's best to leave memories of the past unscarred by the present." But as fans still prompted to lovelorn nostalgia by Kayleigh know, it's not always that easy.

Ian Harrison


In it to Ho Chi Minh it: Paul Hardcastle.

Vietnam in the pop charts

JUNE 8 **Paul Hardcastle's electro single 19 spends the last of five weeks at UK Number 1. Using sources including ABC TV's documentary Vietnam Requiem, the track presents manipulated samples on the horrors of the Vietnam war and the average age of its American combatants. "I was sitting here watching a programme one night and I taped it," Hardcastle tells NME. "Of course it's about the Vietnam war, but it's mainly about the fact that those kids were only 19 when they had to go and fight." The single's released on three different 12-inch mixes, while bespoke versions follow in German, Japanese, Spanish and French. Narrator Peter Thomas receives royalties, as does – later – Mike Oldfield.**

Off the grid: (main) John Taylor and Michael Des Barres power up live at Landsdowne Park, Ottawa; (inset) absent frontman Robert Palmer has a fag break.

PALMER LEAVES POWER STATION

JUNE 30 Duran Duran/Chic supergroup The Power Station begin a US tour at Connecticut's Hartford Civic Center, on the back of a Top 10 US LP produced by Chic's Bernard Edwards. Much to everyone's surprise, singer Robert Palmer has been replaced by ex-Silverhead man Michael Des Barres. "They call and say, 'Hey, we're going on the road!' I go, Whaat?! They picked up on my lack of enthusiasm and didn't bother to ask again," Palmer later tells Q. He spends summer '85 finishing his solo LP *Riptide*, which contains 1986 hit Addicted To Love, instead. Prior to the split, bassist John Taylor had told Creem, "There's a lot of critical esteem for Robert, and a lot of critical hatred of Duran Duran."

Getty (5), Alamy (2), Retna/Avalon

ALSO ON!

AXEL GREASED

1 **Harold Faltermeyer**'s electronic instrumental Axel F, the theme for **Eddie Murphy**'s (above) character Axel Foley in the Beverly Hills Cop movie, peaks at US Number 3. The song will reach UK Number 4 on June 29.

CD EYE ON YOU

8 It's reported that CD players are getting cheaper, with Sanyo's new CP660 model costing just $299 (more than $780 today).

BRADFORD UNITES

9 A three-night fundraiser for the Bradford City Football Disaster Fund at Bradford St George's Hall begins. **Kiki Dee**, **Argent**, **The Cult**, **Joolz**, **Smokie** and **Black Lace** all play. The charity record You'll Never Walk Alone by **The Crowd** tops the UK singles charts on June 15.

SPROUT IT LOUD

22 **Prefab Sprout**'s *Steve McQueen* enters the UK charts at 21. In the US it's released as *Two Wheels Good*, lest the actor's estate be displeased. Mainman Paddy McAloon tells City Limits magazine he chose the title, "because he's not Robert De Niro… his films are romantic and instinctive and that's what I want."

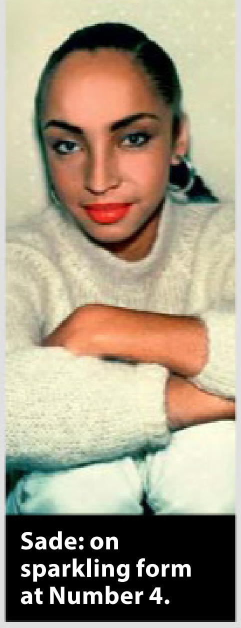
RIGHT SAID 'HEAD

29 **Motörhead** celebrate their 10th birthday with a gig at the Hammersmith Odeon. Says Lemmy: "We want everyone to bring a birthday cake and, on my command, smash it into the face of the person sitting next to you."

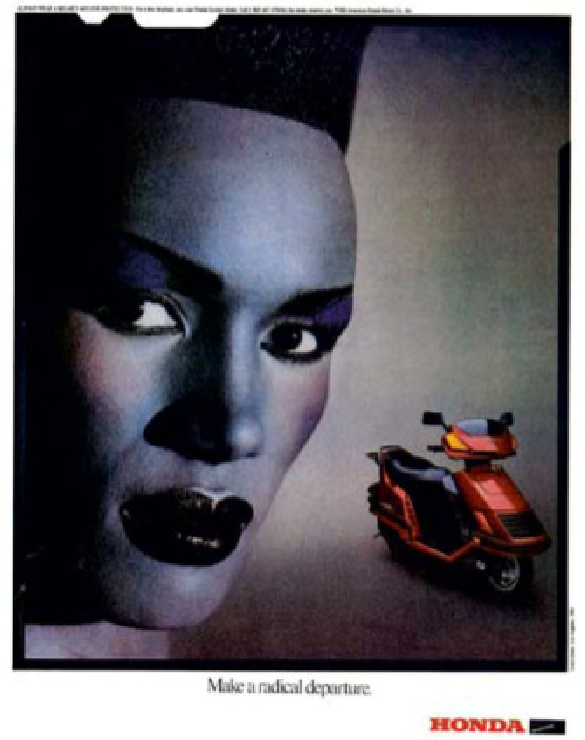
TOP TEN

US CDs JUNE 15

1	**NO JACKET REQUIRED**	PHIL COLLINS	ATLANTIC
2	**BORN IN THE USA**	BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN	COLUMBIA
3	**AROUND THE WORLD IN A DAY**	PRINCE & THE REVOLUTION	PAISLEY PARK
4	**DIAMOND LIFE**	SADE	PORTRAIT
5	**LIKE A VIRGIN**	MADONNA	SIRE
6	**THE DARK SIDE OF THE MOON**	PINK FLOYD	HARVEST
7	**CENTERFIELD**	JOHN FOGERTY	WARNER BROS
8	**MAKE IT BIG**	WHAM!	COLUMBIA
9	**SONGS FROM THE BIG CHAIR**	TEARS FOR FEARS	POLYGRAM
10	**PRIVATE DANCER**	TINA TURNER	CAPITOL


Sade: on sparkling form at Number 4.

AD ARCHIVE 1985



Grace Jones endorses Honda mopeds: on the TV spot she also bit Adam Ant's earlobe! Later Miles Davis did a similar ad, sadly with no ear nibbling.

Vol 1
Jimi Hendrix Live Isle of Wight 30-8-1970

Don't let it 'appen again: (above) Slade, evidently relaxed regarding the Ramones' (Joey, above left) appreciation of their *oeuvre*; (left) a bona fide unofficial Hendrix Isle Of Wight live album; (below) Stevie Vann gives it the hard sell.

Did Joey pilfer from Noddy?

Your music-related queries answered, and rock enigmas solved, courtesy of the MOJO think tank.

Listening to the Ramones, I heard what I thought must have been a cover of Slade B-side I Won't Let It 'Appen Agen. It turned out it was a different song [I Won't Let It Happen, from 1992's *Mondo Bizarro*], attributed to Joey Ramone and Andy Shernoff. It's not just the titles that are similar, part of the chorus is near identical to the Slade song. We know the Ramones were Slade fans, so it couldn't have been an inadvertent steal. So how did they get away with it?

Karl Hunter, via e-mail

MOJO says: A Slade spokesperson did not comment, but writer Jim Lea has expressed satisfaction at Slade's influence on numerous American bands, including the Ramones. We've all heard the 'where there's a hit' tales – hello Led Zeppelin, George Harrison, Radiohead and many more – but it's arguably more fun when writers allow songs that sound somewhat like each other to caper merrily on in the wild unmolested. To wit: Arthur Lee kept his cool over the similarity of a chunk of Madonna's Beautiful Stranger to Love's She Comes In Colors, The Band seemed serene about Van Morrison's echoing of The Weight for his Crazy Love, and Roger Waters was blunt as ever regarding similarities between the Floyd's Echoes and Sir Andrew Lloyd Webber's theme for The Phantom Of The Opera. "It probably is actionable," he told Q's Tom Hibbert in 1992, "but I think that life's too long [sic] to bother with suing Andrew fucking Lloyd Webber." Oof! But, of course, the best people do it: see Neil Young's Borrowed Tune ("I took [it] from The Rolling Stones"), the time Noel Gallagher, having already been visited by our learned friends, tactfully declined to get legal on TV talent show popsters' Hear'Say when their single sounded like Oasis, and Belle And Sebastian, who 'fessed up to the authorities about 2004's Wrapped Up In Books sounding rather like Cliff and The Shadows' In The Country. That's the circle of life, that is. Send us your most egregious examples, please!

POTTY SEGUES: YOUR SAY

At school in 1979 music was played as the staff and housemaster walked into assembly. This was slowly turned down as he spoke the words, "Good morning everyone. Please be seated." One morning Gary, who normally had the DJ job, was ill, so I was drafted in. I was given a Chris De Burgh LP to play. This was left unopened, and I subbed with Dr Alimantado's Poison Flour. That morning the opening words were, "Warr, my office. Good morning everyone. Please be seated."

Chris Warr, via e-mail

MOJO says: Excellent choice, Chris. And thanks to John Burscough of Brigg, North Lincs, who remembers going to a wedding reception where the newlyweds hit the dancefloor to Freda Payne's Band Of Gold "with its tale of a bride waiting in the darkness of her lonely room, hoping that her husband will walk back in and love her like he tried before. It didn't stay on the turntable very long."

BREAKING ADS

I still find myself belting out the '90s "Whoah! Bodyform" sanitary towels jingle. But who sang it? Online reports disagree.

Chris Meehan, via e-mail

MOJO says: That honour goes to Stevie Vann, former wife of Mutt Lange and voice coach to the glitterati. She's also sung with Elton John, Manfred Mann, Michael Kiwanuka and Chaka Khan, while her other ad credits include Crunchie, VO5 shampoo and Tennent's Lager.

FILL YER BOOTS

Re: High Street bootlegs, Ask MOJO 342. Bought *Jimi Hendrix Live Isle Of Wight* (both volumes) at, I think, the Tottenham Court Road Virgin store. I also have other Hendrix live albums but I don't think I got these at Virgin, more likely at record shops in maybe Notting Hill or on Berwick Street.

Mike Crossley, via e-mail

MOJO says: Thanks also to the reader who shared tales of buying brazenly bogus vinyl copies of The JAMMS' *1987: What The Fuck's Going On?* and snide Cure LP picture discs from reputable outlets (the latter was explained away as being in such a limited run that by the time anyone might complain they'd all been sold). And to those who pointed out that the dastardly practice hasn't gone away, with the online availability of clearly unofficial live product by Guns N'Roses, The Clash, AC/DC, Led Zeppelin and even The Beatles. Plus ça change, etc.

HELP MOJO

The recent Oscars inspired me to look out The Nice and their version of America. On Spotify they have edited out the child at the end who says something like, "America is pregnant with promise and anticipation but is murdered by the hand of the inevitable." Where's that gone? Bit Stalinist/revisionist if you ask me.

Phil, via e-mail

CONTACT MOJO

Have you got a challenging musical question for the MOJO Brains Trust? E-mail **askmojo@bauermedia.co.uk** and we'll help untangle your trickiest puzzles.

Getty (3)

Power Move On ’Em

Win! A pair of Q Acoustics M20 HD wireless speakers.

BRITISH AUDIO specialists, Q Acoustics, is offering one lucky MOJO reader a chance to win a pair of M20 HD wireless powered speakers worth £399. A powerful, immersive and convenient way to enjoy music and movie sound anywhere in the home, this stereo music system features aptX™ HD Bluetooth® connectivity for wireless streaming of high resolution-quality audio from devices such as a smartphone, tablet, laptop and network streamer.

The versatile M20 can also deliver superb sonics from a games console, TV, turntable, set-top box, CD player and portable music players alike. And, with an amplifier built into one speaker, there’s no extra amplifier box cluttering up your living space. The M20 HD arrives in elegant matte white, vintage walnut veneer (pictured) or classic matte black model finishes.

Get in the game by completing this month’s crossword. Then send a scan of it to mojo@bauermedia.co.uk, making sure to type CROSSWORD 344 in the subject line. Entries without that subject line will not be considered. Please include your home address, email and phone number. The closing date for entries is **July 2**. For the rules of the quiz, see www.mojo4music.com.

For more information on Q Acoustics products please visit www.

ANSWERS

MOJO 342

Across: 1 Joe Strummer, 6 Stop, 10 Ceremony, 11 Stories, 12 First, 14 Dry Cleaning, 17 See-Saw, 19 Main Street, 20 Dogs, 22 Clarence, 23 Carr, 24 Atem, 26 Piano, 27 Gore, 28 The Fly, 30 Waters, 31 Kit, 34 Even, 35 Ethan, 38 Shine On, 39 Omen, 43 Low, 45 Innuendo, 46 Blue Lines, 50 Thieves, 53 Curve, 54 Draper, 55 Rat Race, 56 Lion, 57 Budgie, 58 Live Aid, 59 Ono, 60 Lullaby, 61 Berry Gordy Jr.

Down: 1 Jackson Browne, 2 Earl, 3 Tim Friese-Greene, 4 Mayall, 5 Essra Mohawk, 7 Things Have Changed, 8 Pasche, 9 Robin Scott, 13 I’m A Man, 15 Sweet, 16 Atlantic, 18 Sandy Denny, 21 Opera, 25 Most, 29 Jeff Beck, 32 Ice, 33 Anton, 36 Hal, 37 Now, 40 Nilsson, 41 Sun Ra, 42 Albertine, 44 Oliver, 47 Next Year, 48 Stealing, 49 Avalon, 51 Gandalf, 52 Let It Be, 57 Blur, 59 Old.

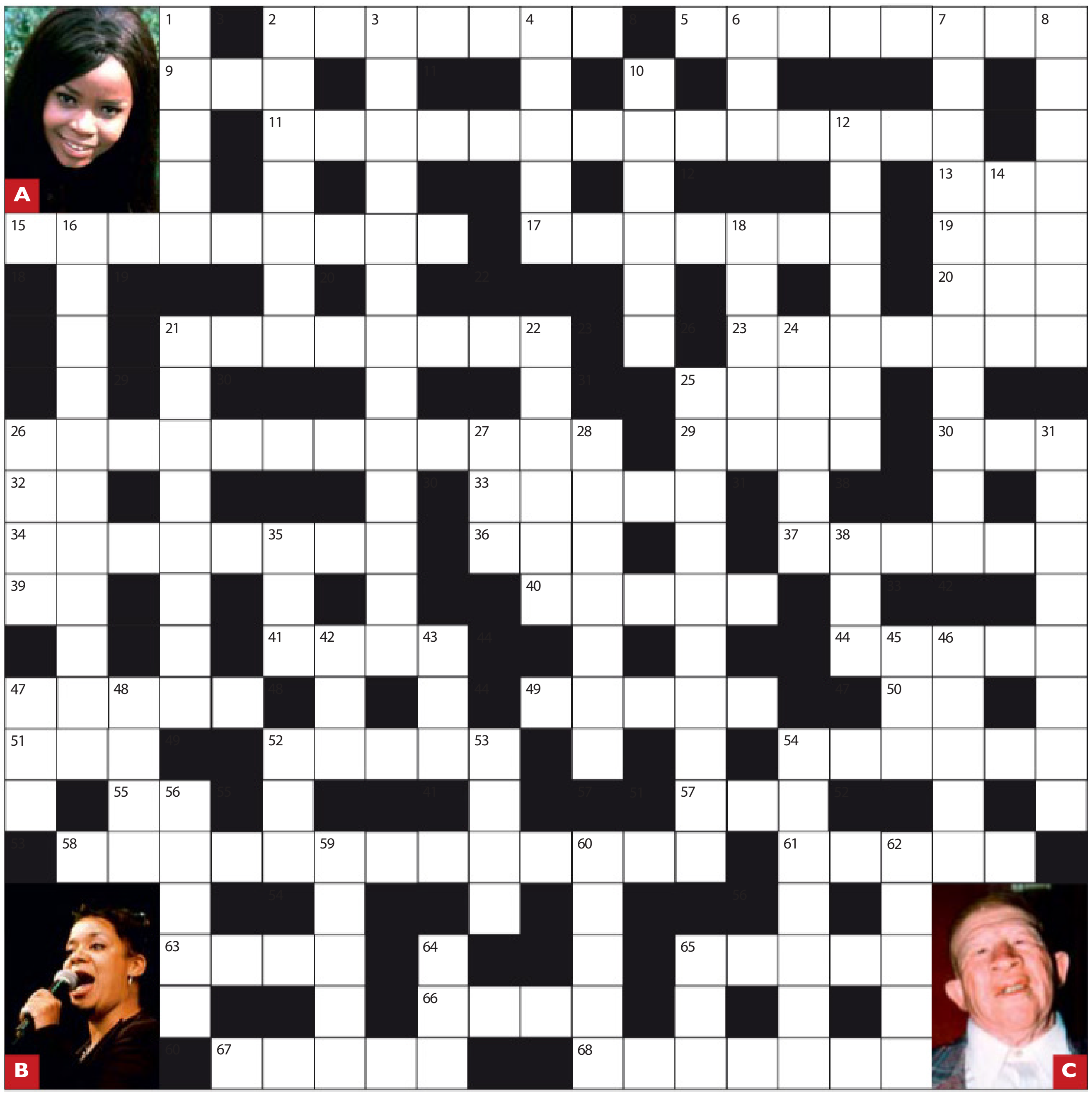
Winners: **Karl Kitts** of **Liverpool** and **John Norman** of **Torrington, Devon** each win a pair of Jamaica Soundsystem Headphones from Trojan Jamaica and Meters Music.

ACROSS

2 Venerable, prismic north London venue? (7)
5 Carly Simon’s appetising LP of ’74 (8)
9 Ronnie James’ eponymous band (3)
11 Soulful producer of Al Green et al (6,8)
13 Cube, T., or Fresh Kid? (3)
15 On the hour, The Pop Group (2,3,4)
17 Catch-all term for post-punk (3,4)
19 Music sticking to the white lines? (1,1,1)
20 The Slits’ Ms Up (3)
21 See photoclue A (1,1,6)
23 ZZ Top, electromagnetic in ’94 (7)
25 Celestial LP by Belly, Erasure and Earth, Wind & Fire? (4)
26 1980 Fall disc subtitled It’s Now Or Never (7,5)
29 British reggae imprint, rival to Trojan (4)
30 Downpatrick indie rockers (3)
32 Initially, Detroit techno rebels (1,1)
33 Iggy, Springsteen and The Cars cut live LPs there (5)
34 Can’s Ibizan freak-out (4,4)
36 Oasis’s Mr Archer (3)
37 Willy DeVille took a Spanish one (6)
39 NYC no wave radicals (2)
40 Peter Hammill’s 1975 persona (5)
41 PiL, on the up? (4)
44 London rap variant, or debut Radiohead EP? (5)
47 ----- Payne, Band Of Gold hitmaker (5)
49 Iron Butterfly drummer Ron (5)
50 Meat Beat Manifesto’s God complex? (1,1)
51 Soundtrack acronym (3)
52 Reggae’s electronic offspring (5)
54 Black Francis’s mob (6)
55 Van’s consumptive sheets (1,1)
57 French film music man Francis (3)
58 Bill Evans’ song for his niece (5,3,5)
61 Dread, Rebel or Christmas? (5)
63 Femi, Seun or Fela (4)
65 Rhyl rockers formerly known as The Toilets and Seventeen (5)
66 LL Cool J and Biggie Smalls pondered going back there (4)
67 Manuel Göttsching’s vehicle (5)
68 Simon & Garfunkel’s 1970 hit (7)

DOWN

1 Winter, Froese or Summertyme? (5)
2 See photoclue B (7)
3 Bette Bright’s backing band (13)
4 The Beatles’ German label (5)
6 Oh Sees’ 2017 monster (3)
7 The Teardrop Explodes’ high climber (11)
8 Charlotte Hatherley’s chilly exile? (7)
10 Finnish prog heroes (6)
12 Jac Holzman’s imprint (7)
14 Arthur Russell’s field recording? (4)
16 Narduwar The Human Serviette’s band (11)
18 John Wetton, live in Poland in ’03 (5)
21 See photoclue C (5,3)
22 Stockholm psych band of *Ta Det Lungt* fame (6)
24 Factory’s Belgian friends (5)
25 Lisa Lisa and Cult Jam’s aphrodisiac waxing? (7,3)
26 Miles Davis’s ballet LP? (4)
27 Vintage jazz piano nomenclature (3)
28 Mungo’s Hi Fi and Marina P meet Aldous Huxley (4,3)
31 Sugar at their most vulnerable? (8)
35 Most recently, they were *Loco* (1,1,1)
38 Custodians of *God’s Balls* (3)
42 The ‘Uncrowned Queen Of The Blues’ Ms Cox (3)
43 Ovoid prog band (3)
45 NWOBHM Mancs once known as Venom (3)
46 Nick Cave’s *Prayer* (5)
47 Anti-fascist Sheffield label and studio (3)
48 Chess R&B great Ms James (4)
52 Underworld’s ‘razor of love’ song (3)
53 Doers of dirty deeds, dirt cheap (2,2)
54 Brian Protheroe’s pastime (7)
56 Billy Bragg’s *William* ----- (5)
59 George Michael’s comfort (5)
60 Berlin techno Channel (5)
62 Eminent Motown sub-label (5)
64 Label whose name means Radio Corporation of America (1,1,1)
65 Neil Young and Crazy Horse’s curve? (3)



Getty (3)

Push the button: early Hüsker Dü (from left) Grant Hart, Greg Norton and Bob Mould, backstage at the Longhorn Bar, Minneapolis, 1980.

Greg Norton and Hüsker Dü

Serendipity, food retail and punk brought them together. But smack and the big time drove them apart…

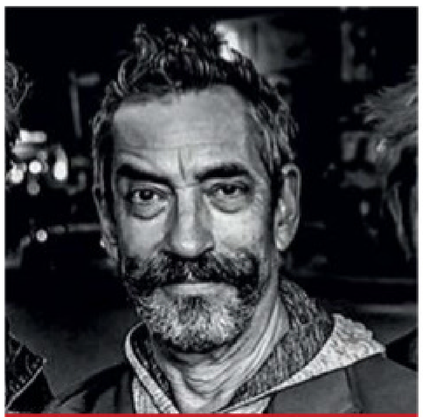
HELLO SPRING 1978

I was working at Melody Lane, a record shop in a suburban strip mall in St Paul, Minnesota. A couple of months later, I met this guy in the food court who turned out to be Grant [Hart]. He was all upset that I'd taken his job which we'd both applied for. I convinced the assistant manager to hire Grant too, and we became fast friends, sharing a ferocious appetite for anything punk rock.

Melody Lane had a sister shop, Cheapo Records, on the campus of Macalester College, where I got some shifts. One Saturday, Grant brought a speaker to Cheapo, set it up on the sidewalk and started playing Ramones songs. Along comes this lanky kid in a leather jacket, All Star sneakers and a Johnny Ramone haircut, who turned out to be Bob [Mould]. There was no band yet but the manager of Cheapo, Charlie Pine, had landed two gigs at a local dive bar, and said we had to form one. The next day, Grant brought over Bob, who played a Flying V. They initially thought of another bassist but when we jammed some Ramones songs, they heard I was good enough instead. Charlie was on keyboards, and he named us Buddy & The Returnables. We played all covers: Buzzcocks, Pere Ubu, Elvis Costello, Nick Lowe, Dave Edmunds, Eddie Cochran, Ramones, Velvets.

But after the first show, Bob, Grant and I decided to keep rehearsing without Charlie – he was a couple of years older, and a stockbroker, we didn't gel with him – and writing our own songs. Neither did we want to be known as The Returnables. At my house, Grant was making up dirty lyrics to Talking Heads' Psycho Killer, and instead of "Qu'est-ce que c'est?", I shouted out "Hüsker Dü?" which is Norwegian for 'Do you remember?' – it was a memory-related board game in the '70s.

A couple of weeks later, we got another gig, and after we finished, we went back on and the three of us started playing our original songs. Charlie had no idea what was going on, and when a friend yanked the lead out of his Farfisa organ, that was the moment Hüsker Dü was born.



"The next show was horrible, and Bob cancelled the rest."

GOODBYE JANUARY 1988

Grant was the joker, the free spirit who couldn't give two fucks about breaking rules. Bob was quieter, more serious, and I figured I was the balance between their two dynamics. I know we named our first LP *Everything Falls Apart*… we had wondered how long we could keep doing what we did, but as long as it stayed fun, we would.

Once we signed to Warners, things changed. The bigger we got, the less there was for us to do. But demands also meant we had way less time for ourselves.

Bob and Grant were also clashing over who got more songs per album. And there was Grant's heroin problem. Toward the end of 1987, we played six US shows. The first was brilliant, but the next wasn't so good, and that night Grant's methadone accidentally went down the drain in the hotel room. The next show was horrible, and Bob cancelled the rest, and that was that.

We tried to set up an intervention but Grant's sister tipped him off and he didn't show. The last time the three of us were all together was at Grant's parents' house; they were just in complete denial that he had a problem. Bob then removed himself, though Grant claimed he'd already left after we'd flown home from the last show. I was completely shell-shocked, because I thought Grant and Bob were getting on better and we'd turned a corner and could start a new era with our third Warners album. I couldn't convince Bob to continue with a new drummer, and I agree now that Hüsker Dü could only ever be us three, and [after Hart died in 2017] of course that'll never happen again.

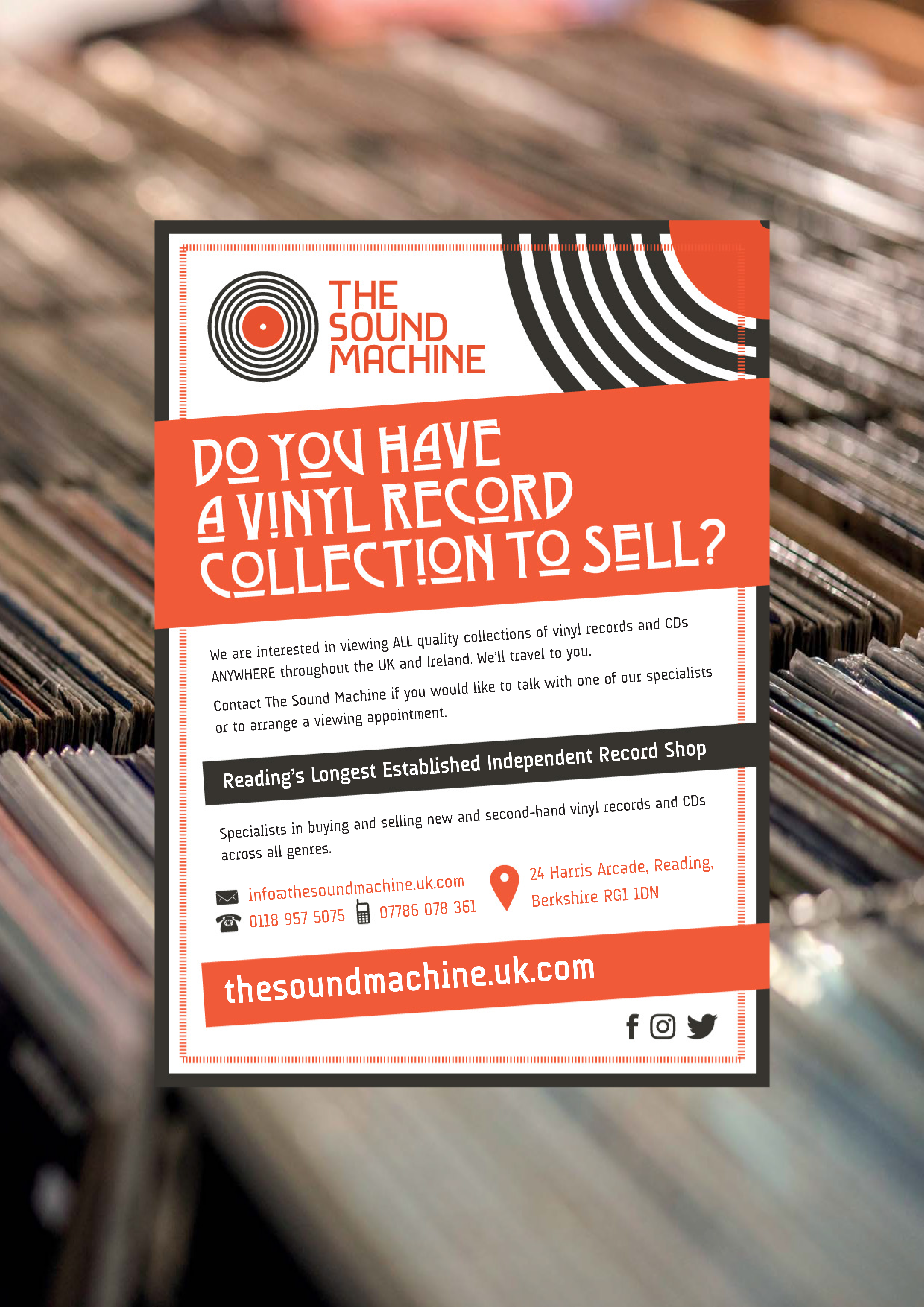
After we split, I went into the restaurant business, then sold wine for a small boutique wine importer; I currently work in a flour mill, keeping it clean so things don't blow up. But I also got back into music in 2006. Bob still plays lots of his Hüsker Dü songs at his shows, and my new band UltraBomb plan to play some of Grant's material. Fans still want to hear that stuff, and I reckon Hüsker Dü are more popular now than when we were playing.

As told to Martin Aston

UltraBomb's debut album Time To Burn is out on UltraBomb Records on May 27.

Friend, you've got to fall: the band nears its end, October 1987; (left) Norton today.

© Kathy Chapman, Getty



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Alex Izenberg
I'm Not Here

'I'm Not Here' inhabits the shaggy, world-weary mode of Izenberg's favourite '70s artists, folks like Harry Nilsson, John Lennon, Randy Newman, and Lou Reed.

Recorded at Tropico Studios, produced by Izenberg and Greg Hartunian in Los Angeles, CA, its swelling string and woodwind arrangements – courtesy of collaborator Dave Longstreth of Dirty Projectors – bring to mind the technicolor sweep of Van Dyke Parks.

Out Now